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Cong. slams Centre's stance on Chabahar

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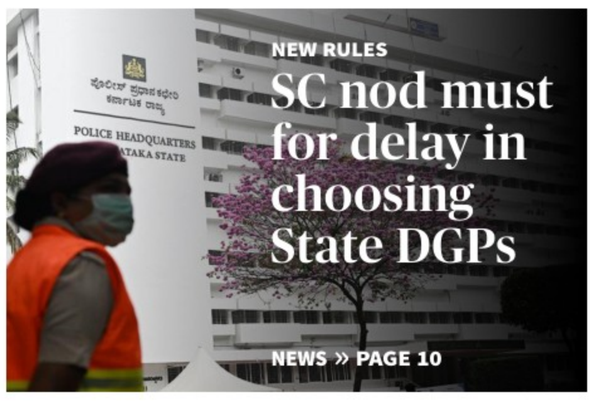

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LPG crunch hits clubs in city

BENGALURU
The conflict in West Asia and its effect on LPG supply have hit clubs in the city, with many sending out circulars to members about shortened menus and restricted guest entries. » PAGE 2

Civic polls will be held in May: DKS

BENGALURU
Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar urged all aspirants seeking a ticket to contest the upcoming Bengaluru civic polls to work for the party irrespective of whether they secure a ticket or not. He told the aspirants that the election will be held in May. » PAGE 2

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Assembly polls begin on April 9; West Bengal to vote in two phases

Polling will be held in Assam, Puducherry, and Kerala on April 9 and in Tamil Nadu on April 23, while West Bengal will vote on April 23 and 29; poll panel announces byelections to eight Assembly seats in various States; counting of votes on May 4

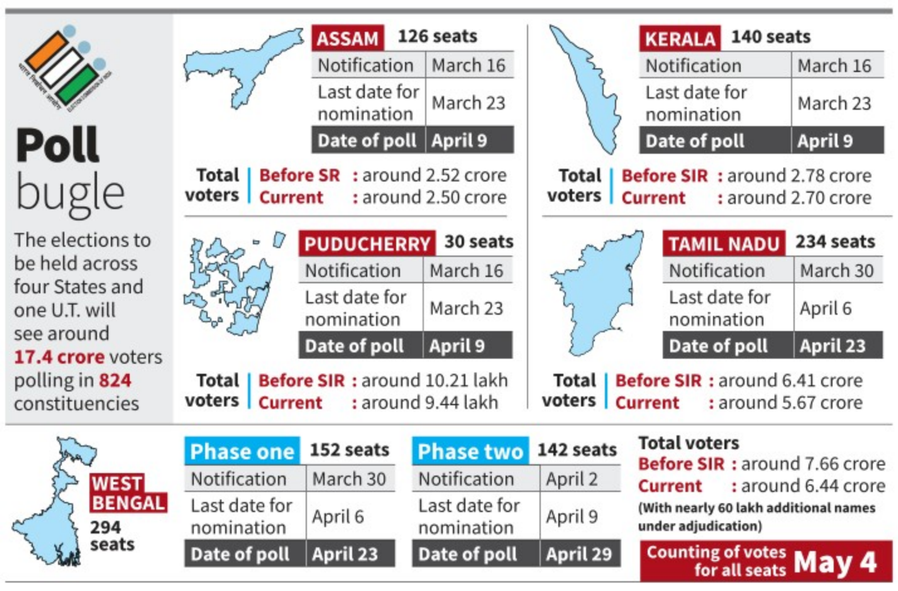
Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

The Assembly elections will be held in a single phase in Assam, Puducherry, and Kerala on April 9 and in Tamil Nadu on April 23, while West Bengal will vote in two phases on April 23 and 29, the Election Commission of India (EC) announced on Sunday.

Counting for all four States and the Union Territory will be held on May 4.

The Model Code of Conduct has come into effect with the announcement of the poll schedule.

At a press conference here, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said around 17.4 crore electors would vote in 824 Assembly constituencies across the four States and one Union Territory.



In West Bengal, 152 constituencies will vote in the first phase and 142 in the second.

The commission announced byelections to eight Assembly constituencies in various States. Counting of votes for the bypolls will also be held on May 4.

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KARNATAKA BYPOLLS ON APRIL 9 » PAGE 4

Parties welcome fewer poll phases in West Bengal

KOLKATA
With the 2021 Assembly election having been held in eight phases, major political parties in West Bengal have welcomed the two-phase Assembly polls announced for the State on Sunday. » PAGE 9

LDF swings into action in Kerala with list of names

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
The ruling Left Democratic Front in Kerala sought to steal a march on the Congress-led United Democratic Front, with its two major alliance partners announcing their candidates on Sunday. » PAGE 5

BJP accused of trying to poach Odisha Congress legislators

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

When an attempt to bribe them was being made, two were caught and handed over to the police

There was high drama at Wonderla Resort where two persons were caught red-handed while attempting to bribe Congress MLAs from Odisha staying in the resort and threatened them when they refused the offer on Sunday.

There were a total of four persons, and while two fled the others were handed over to the Bidadi Police. An FIR was yet to be registered at the time of going to the press on Sunday night.

Accusing the BJP of attempting to poach the Congress legislators from Odhisa as part of the saffron party's 'Operation Lotus', Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Sunday said that ₹5 crore had been offered to each of the legislators. Ahead of the voting in Odisha Assembly for four seats to Rajya Sabha on Monday, March 16, in which no party has the required number to win the fourth seat, the Congress had moved eight legislators to a resort in Bidadi on the city's outskirts. The legislators have been in the resort since Thursday, and Mr. Shivakumar had also met them.

Mr. Shivakumar, who in the past has had experience of handling Congress legislators from Maharashtra and Gujarat on separate occasions, is learnt to have been entrusted with the logistics involved for Odisha legislators.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 4

LPG bookings fall to 77 lakh, hinting let-up in panic-buying

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Bookings for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) refills have declined to about 77 lakh on Saturday from 88.8 lakh the day before, indicating some easing of panic-buying, even as the government said there is no shortage of petrol, diesel, or cooking gas, and supplies remain stable despite the West Asia conflict.

All domestic "refineries are operating at high capacity and maintaining adequate crude oil inventories", the Centre said on Sunday in its daily update on the impact of the West Asia situation. "The country remains self-sufficient in the production of petrol and diesel, requiring no imports of the fuels to meet domestic demand."

People queue with their LPG cylinders at a dealership in Patna on Sunday. ANI

Oil marketing companies have reported no dry-outs at fuel retail outlets or LPG distributors, and petrol, diesel, and LPG supplies are being maintained regularly, it said.

An Indian-flagged crude tanker, *Jag Laadki*, sailed out safely from Fujairah in the UAE on Sunday morning after loading 80,800 tonnes of Murban crude oil, despite an attack on the oil terminal. All crew members of the India-bound vessel are safe, the government said. *Jag Laadki* is the fourth Indian-flagged vessel to have come out of the war zone unharmed.

The government said it continued to prioritise domestic consumers and ensure uninterrupted LPG supply, particularly for households and priority sectors such as hospitals and educational institutions.

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Not ready for deal, might hit Kharg 'for fun', says Trump

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump has warned that he is not ready to seek a deal to end the war with Iran, as U.S. ally Israel launched a new wave of strikes on Sunday, more than two weeks into the conflict in West Asia.

Mr. Trump, in an interview, said he thought Tehran was keen to come to the table but that Washington would fight on for better terms and might bomb targets on Iran's Kharg Island "a few more times just for fun".

FULL REPORT ON » PAGE 12

Nearly 30 law and order police stations in city functioning without full-time inspectors

Chetan B.C.
BENGALURU

Nearly 30 law and order police stations in Bengaluru are operating without full-time inspectors (station house officers), at least five senior police officers confirmed to *The Hindu*. Also, five traffic police stations in the city function without inspectors.

There are 116 law and order, 53 traffic, nine CEN and eight women's police stations in the city. This essentially means nearly a quarter of law and order police stations in the city currently do not have inspectors.

The vacant posts are partly being filled by inspectors from other police stations holding additional charge, according to police sources. What's more is that nearly 60% of inspectors in city police stations have completed two years in their posts and are awaiting transfer orders amid mounting vacancies. In addition, several Assistant Commissioners of Police are also due for transfer. According to data, of the 20,000 sanctioned posts for the Bengaluru city police, only 15,000 have been filled, with the rest lying vacant, highlighting the workload on existing staff. "Even with the current strength, 20-30% of personnel are deputed to bandobast duty near places such as Freedom Park or at event venues," a senior officer told *The Hindu*.

The vacant posts are partly being filled by inspectors from other police stations holding additional charge. FILE PHOTO

Of the 116 law and order police stations, nearly 30 do not have full-time inspectors

The police stations where the SHOs are holding additional charge include Malleswaram, Vivek Nagar, Cubbon Park, Jalahalli, Sadashivanagar (where the inspector is on long leave), and Jnana Bharathi.

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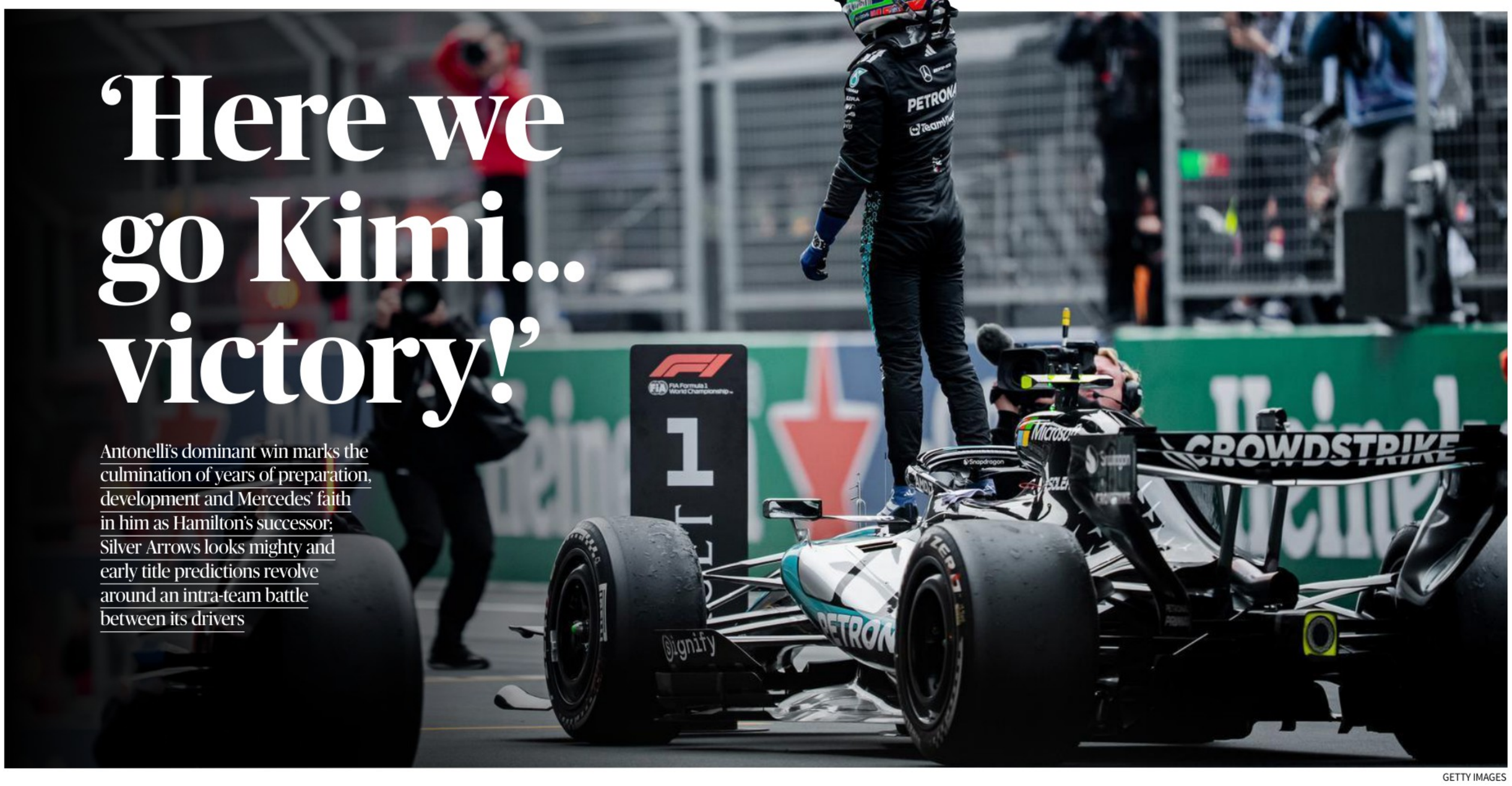
‘Here we go Kimi... victory!’

Antonelli’s dominant win marks the culmination of years of preparation, development and Mercedes’ faith in him as Hamilton’s successor; Silver Arrows looks mighty and early title predictions revolve around an intra-team battle between its drivers



GETTY IMAGES

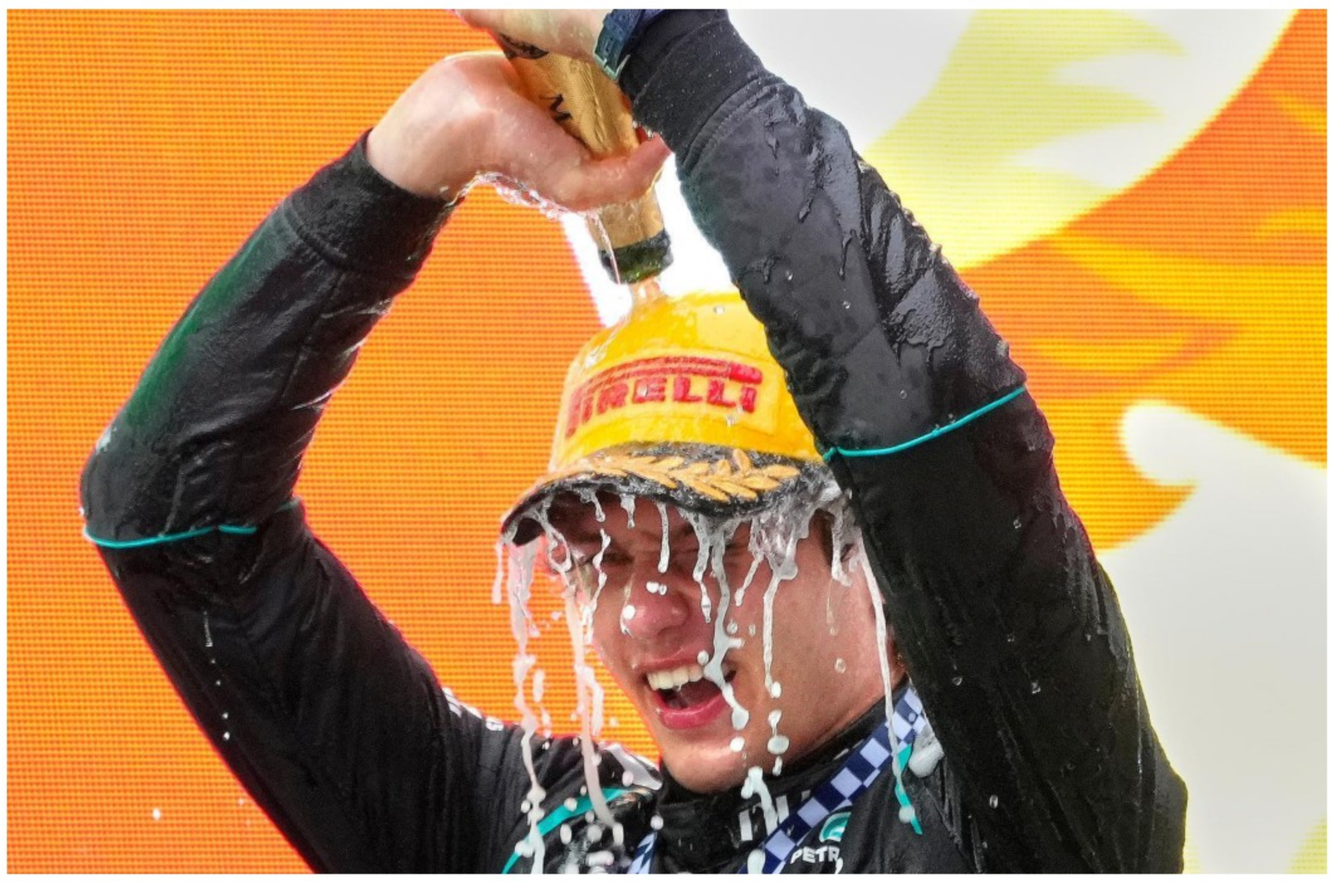
Anirudh Velamuri

Amid the emotional celebrations after Kimi Antonelli crossed the finish line at the Shanghai International Circuit, Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff delivered a message to the doubters - clear, direct, and unmistakable.

“‘He’s too young. We shouldn’t put him at Mercedes. Put him in a smaller team. He needs the experience. Look at the mistakes he makes. ‘Here we go Kimi... victory!’”

For the first time in 504 days, the Italian national anthem echoed around the grandstands - and this time, it wasn’t Ferrari that prompted the Fratelli d’Italia.

Antonelli, the youngest driver ever to convert pole position into a race win, stood beaming between his teammate George Russell and the man whose seat he inherited, seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton.



AP

THE GIST

- While Mercedes is the front-runner, Ferrari continues to be the second best, with Hamilton ending his long wait for a maiden podium with the Prancing Horse
- The others, meanwhile, struggle. McLaren runs into technical issues, while Red Bull and Verstappen encounters reliability issues
- Criticism of the new regulations takes a backseat momentarily as Shanghai witnesses overtaking and competitive racing

Foundations

To say this triumph was a long time in the making would be inaccurate. No one expected the 19-year-old to start winning races. However, the groundwork was laid in 2024, when Hamilton opted to leave Mercedes for Ferrari. Wolff later admitted he had not hesitated to identify Antonelli as the racing legend’s preferred successor.

“I made up my mind (about promoting Antonelli) five minutes after Lewis Hamilton told me he was going to Ferrari. Obviously, we were discussing other options, and obviously, the Max (Verstappen) idea couldn’t be discounted completely, looking at what happened at Red Bull. But instinctively, this is the line-up that I always wanted,” he had then told reporters.

So for Mercedes, this victory represents the culmination of years of investment. Antonelli was first identified in April 2019, while still racing in karting. Rapid progression has long defined his career. He won the Formula Regional European Championship in 2023. Rather than following the conventional route through Formula 3, he advanced directly to Formula 2 while simultaneously completing private Formula 1 tests across circuits including Austria, Imola, Silverstone, Barcelona, and Spa-Francorchamps.

Dominant win

On Sunday at the Chinese Grand Prix, Antonelli reinforced why Mercedes entrusted him with a top seat. In a remarkable qualifying performance, he claimed pole position - becoming the youngest pole-sitter in F1 history - outpacing Russell by 0.222 seconds.

Shanghai’s long back straight places a premium on clean air and tyre management. Starting from pole offers a crucial strategic advantage, particularly in controlling pace and pit windows.

When the lights went out, however, Ferrari responded as expected. Hamilton briefly snatched the lead, while Charles Leclerc overtook Russell. Antonelli, undeterred, reclaimed first place on lap two and prevented rivals from dictating strategy. From there, he controlled the race with maturity beyond his years. His only notable error came late on, when he locked up under braking and ran slightly wide. For a brief moment, Russell appeared poised to capitalise – but the mistake proved inconsequential. Antonelli crossed the line unchallenged.

This was his defining moment, the realisation of a teenage dream. His emotion on the podium said everything.

“I’m speechless. I’m about to cry, to be honest. But yeah, thank you so much to my team because they helped me achieve this dream. I’m super happy. I said yesterday that I really wanted to bring Italy back on top, and we did today. Even though I gave myself a little bit of a heart attack towards the end with a flat spot, it was a good race.”

Two races into the new season and a pair of Mercedes’ 1-2s only strengthens early predictions: this year’s title fight is going to be an intra-Mercedes battle.

Hamilton finds his rhythm

Last season, in his dismal debut campaign with Ferrari, which featured a sole sprint win incidentally at this very circuit, questions emerged about Hamilton’s adaptation and longevity in the sport. On Sunday, the narrative shifted. He secured his first podium for the Scuderia after a spirited duel with teammate Leclerc.

A driver with a record 105 race victories describing the race as one of the most enjoyable of his career said everything about what this finish meant, underscoring that doubts about his waning competitive edge were premature.

“We've got a lot of work to do to try and keep up, but I had so much fun. It’s one of the most enjoyable races that I’ve had in a long, long time, if ever. The fact that the cars are the way they are this year and that battle with Charles at the end was awesome... great wheel-to-wheel battle, very fair and just what we want. There was one moment we did touch, but it was just a kiss, so it’s okay. But that’s what it’s about. It’s about tough racing.”

It was a compelling watch for spectators and Ferrari fans in particular, even if it aided Russell’s P2 finish. Team principal Fred Vasseur’s statement that the drivers are free to race was music to the neutrals’ ears, even if it comes at the expense of some elevated heart rates among the Tifosi.

“I think it was under control; there was great respect between them. You are always a bit scared because something can happen, but in the end, it is very difficult to freeze positions on track. We were doing a good job and you couldn’t know what would happen at the end. I think it was the right decision. We also need this to grow as a team. It was a good battle, good for the team, good for Formula 1 and good for the fans,” Vasseur declared.

There is also hope that Ferrari might cut the gap to the Silver Arrows’ rocketship. “A package was planned for Bahrain, which we will bring to Miami. We will also look to bring other developments, maybe a package and a half.”

Giants fumble

While Mercedes is flying high, McLaren, which uses its power units, including the 1.6-liter V6 turbocharged hybrid engine and energy recovery systems, has spectacularly stumbled at the start of this era of revamped regulations.

While Lando Norris managed to race at the Australian GP after Oscar Piastri’s pre-race crash, both were consigned to their respective garages with the team failing to field both cars at the Shanghai International Circuit. The reason? Two separate electrical issues in the power units.

McLaren has attributed the gap to Mercedes and Ferrari on an “underdeveloped” chassis more than a power unit knowledge deficit. But whatever the issue may be, it needs to get its act together soon or risk being left behind before it can get to grips with its car. Next door, Max Verstappen has struggled to come to terms with his Red Bull Racing car, which lacked grip throughout the weekend. He managed to qualify P8, but yet another dreadful start saw him on the back foot from the get-go.

In typical Verstappen fashion, he fought his way through the field once he put on the hard tyre and was sitting in P6, behind Ollie Bearman’s Haas, before a cooling problem on the energy recovery system then prematurely brought his race to an end. The Dutchman has long been grumbling about this new era of battery-dominated racing, and the events of Shanghai will only amplify his protests.

That Bearman (17) has bagged more points than world champions Norris (15) and Verstappen (8) shows how much both teams have been struggling, not to discount the good work Haas has put in to give the youngster a strong platform to showcase his abilities.

For all the early hype about Adrian Newey turning Aston Martin into one of the front runners, the opposite has been the reality so far. It is comfortably the worst car on the grid, well behind newcomers Cadillac.

Lance Stroll’s car gave up after nine laps while Fernando Alonso was forced to retire after the 32nd. Both drivers are trying to find solace in humour. Stroll asked for divine intervention ahead of the Japanese Grand Prix, the home race for engine supplier Honda, while Alonso waved to Sergio Perez’s Cadillac as it cruised past him.

The videos of Alonso resorting to letting the steering go after struggling with the car’s vibrations has amplified calls for the team to prioritise driver health over all else.

Much better offering

While the Chinese Grand Prix weekend was far from perfect, it was a much better offering compared to the dull race in Australia. Yes, the cars still lack power halfway down the long back straight. Yes, there was ample lifting and coasting (Turns 6, 9 and 11). Yes, the battery continues to have a strong impact when it comes to overtaking. But it is not all doom and gloom, especially if the energy concerns are addressed. There was ample overtaking, even if the majority of it was between Leclerc and Hamilton. It was entertaining overall, cheeky comparisons to Mario Kart notwithstanding.

The accusations that this era will not reward the best drivers are untrue, even if the biggest differentiator remains the quality of drivers’ machinery. For the discerning racing enthusiast, that might be the most crucial footnote from this weekend in Shanghai.

LPG crunch reaches city clubs; banquets, takeaways curtailed

These decisions have come in view of the uncertainty in LPG supply after the invocation of the Essential Services Maintenance Act, 1981, regulating distribution of cooking gas and natural gas

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The ongoing conflict in West Asia and its effect on LPG supply have now hit clubs in Bengaluru, with many sending out circulars to members about shortened menus and restricted guest entries.

These decisions have come in view of the uncertainty in LPG supply following the invocation of the Essential Services Maintenance Act, 1981, regulating the distribution of cooking gas and natural gas. The clubs are taking these steps to conserve LPG for longer runs so that they do not reach the brink of exhausting the available supply.

Bowring Institute, Bangalore Club, and Bangalore Golf Association (BGA) have sent out similar circulars suspending certain services, while some, like Koramangala Club, have stopped taking bookings for major parties, prioritising services for previously booked events.

Recently, the Bowring Institute sent out a circular to its members stating that the institute will rationalise certain food service operations by suspending bulk private food preparations, all banquets, and takeaway orders, apart from restricting entry of guests of members or associates.

A view of Bowring Institute in Bengaluru. FILE PHOTO

Bowring Institute and others have suspended some services, while Koramangala Club has stopped taking major party bookings

Even before the Bowring Institute, the BGA had sent out a circular on March 11 imposing similar restrictions, which came into effect from March 12.

The BGA said several services will face restrictions. Take-away orders will be limited, and the club will not undertake bulk private food preparations. All banquet events have been stopped with effect from March 12 until further notice.

However, both clubs will continue to offer dine-in services to members with a shortened menu to improve operational efficiency. The BGA also said it will rely more on firewood, tandoor, and coal-based cooking for certain dishes in order to reduce LPG consumption.

In a note to its members, the BGA said that priority supply of LPG is currently being given to domestic household consumers due to the prevailing geopolitical situation. As a result, gas supply to establishments such as clubs is not guaranteed and remains beyond the control of the management.

"In order to conserve available gas and ensure that resources are prioritised for members, the club will temporarily rationalise certain food and beverage operations. These measures are member-centric and implemented for the welfare and convenience of members," the note said.

Jayaram, a member of the Koramangala Club core committee, said that they have stopped taking bookings for large parties, while smaller ones continue. He added that the club is now considering operationalising its own biogas plant to meet gas requirements.

"We always have a bulk of leftovers, which can be a source for biogas generation. We never assumed such a situation would arise, so we had not created a facility for biogas. But now, with all these limitations we are facing, having our own source appears to be a very good option," he told *The Hindu*.

Civic activist V. Ravichandar, associated with the Bangalore International Centre (BIC), which has two eateries, said that not just clubs but eateries in public institutions like BIC have also resorted to curtailing menu options. "These places have been removing items from the menu that consume a lot of gas; for example, dosa. It is a measure to ensure there is no need to shut down due to the crisis," he said.

LPG crisis revives talk on ethanol for cooking

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

As the LPG crunch situation continues, conversations about alternative fuels are picking up. Cooking fuel from ethanol, a by-product of sugar production, is one of them.

While a major ethanol producer of Asia, India does not yet have a nationwide, large-scale policy mandating ethanol as a cooking fuel. Pointing this out, Murugesh R. Nirani, former Minister and chairman of Nirani Business Group, said that under the prevailing circumstances of a shortage of LPG, the government should consider a policy that allows the use of ethanol stoves.

"Ethanol is a relatively clean fuel and can be produced from sugarcane, maize, and rice. If recognised as a domestic fuel, it will provide a sustainable market for agricultural products and improve the income of farmers," he said.

India does not yet have a nationwide policy mandating ethanol as a cooking fuel.

He also called for the use of ethanol stoves in hotels, hostels, and lodges, noting that there is excess production of ethanol in the country. "The total production is 2,000 crore litres per annum. But consumption is only 1,100 crore litres, which means 900 crore litres is the excess production," he said, adding that use of locally produced fuel will also help the country become self-reliant.

Currently, ethanol is predominantly used in fuel blending under the Ethanol Blended Petrol programme, for industrial purposes, and in the beverage industry.

Noting that ethanol is cleaner than kerosene, Yogesh Patil, president, South Indian Sugar Mills Association, Karnataka, called for distributing of ethanol during the crisis instead of kerosene.

"Increased usage of ethanol as a fuel will reduce our dependence on other countries in times of crisis and help us achieve energy security," he said.

According to him, there is excess production of sugarcane in the country, leaving enough quantity of sugarcane juice than can be diverted to produce ethanol. "Our sugar mills, because of the non-lifting of ethanol, are running only at 40-45% capacity. They are facing financial difficulty because we have put up the plants, invested a lot of money, but there is no customer available," he said. Using ethanol for cooking will help alleviate this at a big scale, he remarked.

Mr. Patil noted that the association is planning to approach the Chief Minister to request policy decisions in favour of distributing ethanol through any government agency.

The incident reportedly occurred around 1 a.m. while the leopard tried to cross the road on the stretch between Bannerghatta and the Kanakapura exit. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

3-year-old leopardess dies in road accident

The Hindu Bureau

A three-year-old leopardess was killed in a road accident after being run over by an unidentified vehicle on NICE Road in the early hours of Sunday.

The incident reportedly occurred around 1 a.m. while the leopardess tried to cross the road on the stretch between Bannerghatta and the Kanakapura exit. "A three-year-old leopardess, while crossing the road, was hit by an unidentified vehicle leading to its instant death on NICE Road. Forest Department officials visited the spot and removed the carcass. A wildlife offence report has been filed and an investigation is on," said Bengaluru South Division Assistant Conservator of Forests V. Ganesh.

Forest Department officials said that an autopsy is being conducted.

In the past, there have been instances where leopards were killed in road accidents on NICE road. The forests and scrublands fringing Bengaluru harbour an estimated 80-85 leopards. A camera-trap survey by Holématthi Nature Foundation (HNF) last year spotted 54 leopards inside Bannerghatta National Park and around 30 of them roamed in the reserved, deemed, and private forests scattered across the metropolitan periphery.

Shopkeeper booked for hoarding and selling LPG cylinders on black market

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Kengeri police have registered a case against the owner of a shop for allegedly stocking LPG cylinders of various companies illegally and selling them at higher prices to customers.

According to the police, the case has been registered at Kengeri Police Station under the Essential Commodities Act and along with provisions of BNS, 2023. The complaint was lodged by Mahantagouda Tadlagi, 40, a Food Inspector of Bengaluru South Taluk. He stated that at around 3 p.m. on Saturday, he received credible information that Mahalakshmi Enterprises, located at Mylasandra within Kengeri police limits, had illegally stocked the LPG cylinders.

Mr. Tadlagi informed fellow food inspectors Basavaraju and M. Ramesh and approached the Kengeri Police Station. Later, along with Police Sub-Inspector Eshwar Vannur and the police team, they conducted a raid on the shop at around 4.30 p.m.

The police suspect that the cylinders were being stocked to create artificial scarcity and sell them to consumers at inflated prices. A case has been registered against the owner of Mahalakshmi Enterprises.

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From Page One

Nearly 30 L&O police stations don't have full-time inspectors

The list also includes Upparpet and Chamarajpet, both considered highly sensitive, as well as Byadarahalli, which has a substantial number of rowdy-sheeters and frequently witnesses murders.

In some cases, the stations are so crucial that senior officers have withheld relieving orders to ensure that vacancies do not affect investigations and workflow.

Another senior police officer said the vacancies include those arising from transfers after completion of the two-year term, political transfers, and a spate of suspensions in recent months. More than 130 police personnel across ranks were suspended over the past year for various reasons, including corruption.

Why postings to replace them are delayed is the moot question.

The senior police officer told *The Hindu* that the major impact was on the registration of complaints. "As inspectors are handling additional responsibilities, they are often not present at the police stations. In their absence, sub-inspectors try to manage even serious cases without filing FIRs, which can have disastrous consequences," the officer said, adding that corrupt practices tend to surface in such situations.

The officer further explained that the flow of investigations has been affected due to vacancies. "When an inspector is managing two stations, how can we expect the officer to conduct a strict investigation and file airtight charge sheets?" the officer asked.

He also referred to the recent spate of suspensions and said, "Many of the suspensions were carried out without a preliminary inquiry. Such decisions are not only affecting investigations but also the morale of officers."

The officer was referring to suspensions following the stampede at M. Chinnaswamy Stadium and a drug haul by the Maharashtra police in Bengaluru.

Astrologer held for cheating I-T officer of ₹35L

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bharathi Nagar police have arrested a conman who allegedly posed as an astrologer and cheated an Income Tax Department officer of gold and silver ornaments worth about ₹35 lakh on the pretext of performing a special ritual to improve his life and career.

The accused, identified as Shekhar Subbu, 59, resident of Theni in Tamil Nadu, had allegedly fled to his hometown after committing the fraud.

The accused convinced the officer that he could predict his future by looking at his face and claimed that certain rituals needed to be performed to bring success. He reportedly conducted a small ritual after taking about ₹30,000 from the officer.

The accused insisted that a more elaborate ritual was necessary and asked him to bring gold and silver ornaments from his house for the ceremony. The officer handed over 194 gm of gold and 1.3 kg of silver to Shekhar, asking him to perform the ritual and return them the next day. However, the accused allegedly fled with the valuables.

Civic polls will be held in May: DKS

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, who is also the president of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC), urged all aspirants seeking a ticket to contest the upcoming Bengaluru civic polls to work for the party irrespective of whether they secure a ticket or not. He told the aspirants that the election will be held in May and that there should be no confusion regarding it.

Mr. Shivakumar held a preparatory meeting with ticket aspirants and office-bearers for the GBA civic body elections at Bharat Jodo Bhavan in Bengaluru on Sunday. The meeting was attended by over 950 aspirants and several city Congress leaders. "Forget the ticket for now and start the footwork. Visit all houses in your wards and work towards fixing voter list discrepancies; work for the party together before dreaming of the ticket," Mr. Shivakumar told the gathering, according to sources.

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar at a meeting in Bengaluru on Sunday

"Meet the voters and get to know them. If you know your voters, you will know your booth. If you know your booth, then you will own your ward," he said, adding that he would monitor dedicated workers and select candidates from among them.

In February, Mr. Shivakumar submitted a memorandum to State Election Commissioner G.S. Sangreshi alleging serious lapses in the voter list revision ahead of the local body elections. He sought immediate corrective steps, including the preparation of a fresh roll after proper mapping. Following this, voter roll revision was taken up.

According to party sources, more than 1,500 aspirants have expressed interest in contesting the civic body polls by submitting applications. The ticket is likely to be announced after the announcement of election dates.

Man held after wife is found dead

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 24-year-old married woman was found dead under suspicious circumstances at her residence in Yelahanka New Town on Saturday, and police arrested her husband following allegations of dowry harassment and murder.

The deceased has been identified as Krithi, a resident of Brindavan Layout in Yelahanka New Town. Based on a complaint filed by her family members, the Yelahanka New Town police have arrested her husband Pawan Kalyan, a private firm employee, charging him for dowry death. According to the police, Krithi and Pawan got married in December 2024. Family members said that within a few months, disputes began to surface between them.

While the husband and his family allegedly attempted to portray the death as a suicide, the victim's parents have alleged that she was strangled. They claimed that injury marks were found on her neck. The body has been sent for postmortem examination to ascertain the exact cause of death.

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Hitherto known as Sharadamma S D/O Late Sanjivaiah residing at 75 6th Cross Abbigere Road Kammagondana Halli Bangalore North Po Jalahalli West Dist Bangalore Karnataka-560015, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as PRIYA S

LEGAL NOTICE

BEFORE THE HONOURABLE FAMILY COURT AT MUVATTUPUZHA
O.P. 1165/2024

Name and address of the petitioner.
Dincy Babu aged 41 years, D/o N P Babu, Neelangal House, Vengola, Meprathpady, Perumbavoor, Pin 683556

Name and address of the Respondents
Sliex Georgin Philip Aged 41 Years, S/O Late PI Philipose, residing in Kulangara Maliyil house, Kunnathanam P.O. Pathanamthitta-689581, Currently Residing in C/o. KG. Mathew, Kuzhimannil House, Kaduvakkuzhi, Mallappally, Pathanamthitta -689581 (as per job purpose 10/6 PSR PG For Gents, Near MVJ INT School, 9th Main, Tulsi Teatre Road Marthahalli, Bangalore 56003)

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that **O.P. No. 1165/2024** filed by the petitioner before the **Honourable Family Court, Muvattupuzha**, seeking **return gold ornaments and money** is pending. As the respondent has not yet entered appearance, the case is posted on 21/3/26. The respondent, respondent, if having any objection, shall appear **in person or through counsel at 11.00 a.m.** on the said date, failing which the matter will be proceeded **ex parte**

Dated this the 2nd day of February 2026
Adv. Johny K. George
(Counsel for the petitioner)

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LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF THE SUBORDINATE JUDGE OF POLLACHI
E.P.No. 77/2013
O.S.No. 15/2000

Gopal Naidu (Died),
S/o, Gopal Naidu,
10/1,Perumal Chetty Veethi,
Pollachi
and other .... Petitioners

-----vs-----

1. **Philomina,**
W/o, Irudhayaraj,
Naina Terraces, Plot 8,
3rd Floor, 159, Richmond Road, Bangalore - 560025
2. **Pramodh,**
S/o, Irudhayaraj,
Above Address.
3. **Pradeep,**
S/o, Irudhayaraj,
Above Address.
.... Respondents 16 to 18

Whereas the above petitioners have filed the above execution petition against you and others, you are hereby required to make your objection if any in this court in person or by a pleader on the 15th day April of 2026 at 10.30 A.M. Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day mentioned, the petition will be heard and determined in your absence.

By Order
K.THANGARATHNAM, B.Sc.,B.L.,
Advocate, 90, Ansari Street,
Pollachi - 642001

Ice patches on melting glaciers greater threat than thought: ISRO scientists

Researchers have found that the presence of exposed ice patches on the Srikanta Glacier immediately before the flood in Uttarakhand on August 5, 2025, was a signal of ongoing deglaciation and a direct indicator in the landscape of the likelihood of such floods

Meena Menon

A new study by scientists from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), published in *NPJ Natural Hazards*, examines the August 5, 2025 flash flood that destroyed Dharali village in Uttarakhand and killed six people. It sheds light on how warming temperatures affect glaciers, especially exposed ice patches on retreating glaciers, and highlights the need to monitor glaciers using satellite images to provide early warnings of possible disasters.

The study, titled 'Ice-patch collapse and early-warning implications from a Himalayan flash flood: emerging cryo-hydrological hazards under deglaciation', concludes that the collapse of an ice patch on the glacier above Dharali is linked to deglaciation in the Himalaya.

The authors say the findings could help improve understanding of climate risk and disaster preparedness. The study shows that the flash flood was triggered by the collapse of an ice patch in the nivation area of the Srikanta glacier.

Nivation is defined as the erosion of the ground beneath and around a snow bank, primarily as a result of alternate freezing and thawing. This can form a nivation hollow, which gradually becomes deeper when snow repeatedly accumulates in the same place.

A screengrab shows houses being swept away after heavy rains triggered by a cloudburst at Dharali, Uttarkashi district, Uttarakhand in August 2025. PTI

History of extreme events

The study area lies in the upper Bhagirathi river basin in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand. It covers the ridge-to-valley system from the Srikanta glacier to Dharali village, located at a height of 2,650-2,700 m along the Bhagirathi river. The village lies downstream of the glacier-fed Khir Gad stream, which originates from the Srikanta glacier, flows through Dharali, and then joins the Bhagirathi river. The Khir Gad divides Dharali into right- and left-hand bank settlements, increasing its risk of flash floods.

The region has a documented history of extreme events, including the large landslides that brought down massive boulders during the June 2013 Himalayan floods. The researchers used satellite observations, high-resolution topographic analysis, and visual records to reconstruct the sequence of events linking unstable glacier ice to the sudden flood.

The findings expand the range of recognised glacier-related hazards in the Himalaya and identify exposed ice patches as an under-recognised risk from glacier melt.

The Dharali event also shows how instability in the cryosphere can create hazards downstream in high-altitude regions.

The study calls for closer monitoring of glaciers and argues that the focus should extend beyond glacial lake outburst floods (or GLOFs) to include smaller, often overlooked instabilities in the cryosphere. The exposure of ice patches in the Srikanta glacier before the flood represents a transitional state in the snow-ice regime. "Pre-event imagery during the ablation period revealed exposed ice patches on steep north- to northeast-facing slopes, indicating thinning seasonal snow and firn cover consistent with ongoing deglaciation," the authors wrote in the paper.

Such exposure indicates thinning seasonal snow and firn, which is ice that lies between snow and fully formed glacial ice.It usually occurs when warmer conditions reduce the insulating snow layer that stabilises the ice beneath.

Ice patches covered by firn and seasonal snow are relatively resistant to short-term temperature changes whereas exposed ice is more likely to shift or loosen. Because exposed ice responds more quickly to temperature changes or heavy rainfall, it can melt, fragment or collapse more easily, releasing ice, meltwater, and debris that can trigger flash floods.

Therefore, the study finds that the presence of exposed ice patches on the Srikanta Glacier immediately before the floods of August 5 was a signal of ongoing deglaciation and a direct indicator in the landscape that increased the likelihood of such floods.

Satellite observations

Srikanta Glacier is a small- to medium-sized valley glacier with a height of 6,133 m, around 9.8 km upstream of Dharali. The glacier has steep accumulation and ablation zones, seasonal snow cover, and extensive nivation areas. Mountaineering and expedition reports describe unstable ice surfaces, steep slopes, avalanche-prone terrain, and persistent nivation zones beneath the ridge below the Srikanta peak, the paper said.

Nivation is defined as the erosion of the ground beneath and around a snow bank, primarily as a result of alternate freezing and thawing. This can form a nivation hollow, which gradually becomes deeper when snow repeatedly accumulates in the same place

A key implication of the study is that it shows the value of pre-event satellite observations for early warning. Satellite images showed exposed ice patches persisting in the nivation zone during the ablation period, when the glacier loses ice and snow. This indicated that the seasonal snow and firn cover had thinned.

Studies from other cold regions, including the Canadian Arctic and Greenland, also show that the collapse of ice patches can trigger hazards as glaciers lose more ice and snow due to regional warming.

Identifying nivation hollows

Although rarely reported from the Himalaya, events such as the February 2021 Chamoli rock-ice avalanche demonstrate the growing prominence of cryospheric hazards in deglaciating terrain, the study said. In steep nivation hollows, such instability can suddenly release ice, meltwater, and debris, triggering downslope mass movement and related cryo-hydrological hazards.

The Dharali flash flood illustrates how cryospheric instability can trigger geomorphic changes and create hazards downstream in high-altitude Himalayan regions. The study finds that the rapid disintegration of an exposed ice patch in the nivation zone of the Srikanta glacier was the main cause of the event.

The reconstructed sequence, from the exposure of the ice patch during the ablation period to its disappearance and the resulting downstream impacts, shows how earth-observation data can help identify and reconstruct such extreme events in remote mountain terrain.

"A broader implication of this analysis is the identification of nivation hollows as geomorphologically sensitive zones for cryospheric instability," the authors concluded.

"Persistent snow and ice retention on north- to northeast-facing slopes below the Srikanta ridge created conditions conducive to ice-patch exposure and subsequent failure during the ablation season. Similar settings are widespread across the Himalaya, suggesting that systematic identification and monitoring of such zones should form part of regional hazard assess- ment and disaster-risk reduction strategies in the context of ongoing deglaciation

(Meena Menon is an independent journalist, researcher and author. She has a PhD from the University of Leeds. meenamenon@gmail.com)

THE GIST

- A key implication of the study is that it shows the value of pre-event satellite observations for early warning
- Satellite images showed exposed ice patches persisting in the nivation zone during the ablation period, when the glacier loses ice and snow. This indicated that the seasonal snow and firn cover had thinned
- Studies also show that the collapse of ice patches can trigger hazards as glaciers lose more ice and snow due to regional warming
- The study calls for closer monitoring of glaciers and argues that the focus should extend beyond glacial lake outburst floods to include smaller, often overlooked instabilities in the cryosphere

BIG SHOT

An Amazonian turtle (*Podocnemis expansa*) at Jau National Park, located in the Anavilhanas archipelago in the Amazon rainforest, in Amazonas State of Brazil, on Saturday. Riverine communities and scientists have released around 1,500 turtles into the environment as part of a programme to assist the reproduction of the species. AFP

WHAT IS IT?

Trisulphide metathesis: new avenues

Vasudevan Mukunth

Researchers at Flinders University in Australia and their partners recently reported in *Nature Chemistry* a new way to swap sulphur-sulphur bonds. They found that organic trisulphides, which are molecules containing a chain of three sulphur atoms, undergo a spontaneous reaction called metathesis, where they trade parts with each other almost instantly.

The ability has important applications. The researchers used it to modify a fragile anti-cancer drug called calicheamicin without damaging its complex structure. They also used the reaction to create a new type of plastic. Because the sulphur bonds can be broken as easily as they are formed, the resulting material is chemically fully recyclable. As a result, manufacturers can build long polymer chains to create a solid plastic, then use the same reaction to unmake it back into its original starting materials.

The discovery is important because it happens at room temperature without any extra help. Usually, breaking sulphur-sulphur bonds requires intense heat or light or strong catalysts. But the reaction only needed a specific type of solvent, such as dimethylformamide, which is already widely used in industry, to start the process. The reaction is also fast, often requiring only seconds.

The team also explained how this reaction works. While most sulphur reactions traditionally use unstable radicals or ions, it uses a temporary, high-energy molecular arrangement called a thiosulphoxide. This 'chemical pathway' allows the molecules to swap their parts quickly and precisely, producing only pure trisulphides without any side products or unwanted chemical mixtures.

The new trisulphide metathesis reaction can spontaneously make and break sulphur–sulphur bonds at room temperatures GETTY IMAGES

For feedback and suggestions
for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

Science fest to be held tomorrow

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Bangalore University will organise the Bangalore University Science Festival-2026 on Jnana Bharathi campus on March 17 and 18. The event aims to provide a dynamic platform for scientific learning, knowledge exchange, and interaction among researchers, academicians, and students.

Timings
BENGALURU

MONDAY, MAR. 16		
RISE	06:26	SET 18:30
RISE	04:22	SET 16:12
TUESDAY, MAR. 17		
RISE	06:26	SET 18:30
RISE	05:03	SET 17:05
WEDNESDAY, MAR. 18		
RISE	06:25	SET 18:30
RISE	05:44	SET 17:57

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	30	20
Mysuru	33	18
Bengaluru	33	20

Bengaluru Today
33°C The weather will be dry. Day will be warm. Night will be pleasant.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
33°C Morning will be slight cool with mist and haze. Day will be warm. Night also will be slight cool.

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THE HINDU
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Corporations want to regain control over waste collection

Currently, BSWML supervises door-to-door collection, while the corporations oversee the clearance of garbage black spots

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The newly formed city corporations are going to bat for handing over all powers related to door-to-door waste collection to the commissioners of the new civic bodies from Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited (BSWML).

Currently, the BSWML supervises door-to-door collection, while the corporations oversee the clearance of garbage black spots.

According to a Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) official, one of the five corporations proposed at a recent meeting that door-to-door waste collection be brought back under the corporations. Officials argued that the move would enable better planning and give commissioners greater authority over waste management.

"No corporation opposed the proposal at the meeting. However, a decision is yet to be made," the official part of the GBA meeting said. In fact, all commissioners are reportedly on board with the idea. The development comes amid mounting complaints about irregular waste collection and the reappearance of garbage black spots.

Another senior officer confirmed to *The Hindu* that even the GBA was of the opinion that commissioners should have powers over waste collection, and discussions ware under way. It is likely that some powers related to solid waste management may be transferred to the corporations.

Garbage illegally dumped on the roadside next to Vijayanagara bus stand in Bengaluru on Sunday.
K. MURALI KUMAR

The garbage issue was also raised by Leader of the Opposition R. Ashok during the ongoing Assembly session

The garbage issue was also raised by Leader of the Opposition R. Ashok during the ongoing Assembly session. "There is no road in Bengaluru without garbage dumped on its side. Even stretches like M.G. Road are witnessing garbage issues," he said. During the GBA Chief Commissioner M. Maheshwar Rao's public meeting in the East Corporation, a resident of AECS Layout drew the commissioner's attention to waste collection vehicles visiting only once in more than three days. At least eight residents complained about the same issue.

Mr. Rao acknowledged that there was an issue related to irregularity. In this particular case, he ordered health officials to conduct a survey and submit a report.

But these incidents are not isolated. Kavya Rao, a resident of Jayanagar, told *The Hindu* that their area was increasingly witnessing garbage pile-up. "On Tuesday, just a few metres away from Sanjay Gandhi Hospital, nearly a 30-metre stretch was covered in garbage. I had never seen a garbage issue on that stretch," she said. A senior officer, who wished to remain anonymous, admitted that black spots had been increasing and pointed to a shortage of waste collection vehicles and, in several cases, issues with contractors. "Now we have asked the BSWML to provide vehicles so that we can intensify black spot clearance," he said.

Shortage?
An officer from the North Corporation explained that a normative approach was used in 2016-17 to arrive at a calculation which determined that for approximately 750 houses, one waste collection vehicle was required and one pourakarmika was responsible for a 750-metre stretch of road. "Since then, the calculations have not been revised, and there has not been much hiring either. But the city has grown massively in the last 10 years, and now it requires a different approach," the officer said, adding that this naturally creates a shortage of vehicles.

The officer explained that the shortage of vehicles directly impacts the coverage of the total area and also the waste collection time. All these aspects are interlinked, which collectively impacts black spots. In clear terms, if a waste vehicle is covering a large area, there is a high chance that the timing will be affected. In areas where working-class employees reside, they are likely to miss the collection and end up dumping garbage on the streets.

Coordination issue?
The officer also explained that waste collection was being carried out by the BSWML, while black spot management currently falls under the jurisdiction of the corporations. Without effective coordination between the civic bodies and the BSWML, old and previously addressed problems tend to reappear.

To manage this, Assistant General Managers (AGMs) were appointed as coordinating officers, but the arrangement has not yielded the desired results.

Firm lodges complaint over sale of counterfeit cigarettes at KIA

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A manager of a private intellectual property services firm has lodged a complaint with the police, alleging the sale of counterfeit cigarettes near the airport on Thursday.

The complaint was lodged on March 12 by Srinivas S., who is working as a manager at IPR Services, the company that holds agency rights for cigarette brands and distributes them across Karnataka. In his complaint, Srinivas stated that some unidentified persons were allegedly smuggling cigarettes from Cambodia into the country and selling them in Karnataka by packaging them as branded products.

Srinivas alleged that the counterfeit cigarettes were being marketed in a manner similar to original products, which could harm public health and also damage the reputation of the company's brand.

Further investigation is under way.

3 policemen die in accident

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Three reserve sub-inspectors from Bengaluru were killed and two others seriously injured after the car they were travelling in rammed a lorry near Heggare village in Challakere taluk of Chitradurga district on Sunday. The deceased have been identified as Manjunath, Amaresh, and Sachin.

The injured, Mahantesh and Eshwar, were also reserve sub-inspectors.

Preliminary probe reveals that the incident occurred when the police personnel were travelling from Bengaluru to Ballari to attend a friend's wedding. The Challakere police registered a case.

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This is applicable to all Open (Domestic / Global) Tenders issued through e-procurement portal of CIL.

This information is also available on BCCL Website www.bcclweb.in

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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Israel's emergency Budget allocation for military purchases

827 in $ million. Israel has approved an $827-million emergency Budget allocation for military purchases, Israeli media reported on Sunday. The 2.6-billion-shekel package was approved over the weekend by Cabinet Ministers, the daily *Haaretz* reported. AFP

Number of passenger journeys handled by Delhi Metro in 2025

235.8 crore. Delhi Metro handled a whopping 235.8 crore passenger journeys in 2025 with an average daily ridership of 64.60 lakh passengers daily, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) said in a statement on Sunday. PTI

Persons arrested in Iran over suspected links to Israel

20 Iranian authorities have arrested at least 20 people in the country's northwest on suspicion of cooperating with Israel, local media reported on Sunday. The arrests took place during raids on networks linked to Israel in the West Azerbaijan province, the Fars news agency said. AFP

IS detainees transferred by the U.S. from Syria to Iraq

5,700 Iraq warned that drone attacks near Baghdad airport threatened the security of the nearby prison housing Islamic State group suspects brought from Syria. In February, the U.S. completed the transfer of 5,700 IS detainees from Syria to Iraq. AFP

Amount by which NHAI increased its annual pass fee

75 in ₹. The National Highways Authority of India on Sunday said it has increased the rate of its annual pass by ₹75 to ₹3,075 for the next 2026-27 financial year. The annual pass facility was launched on August 15, 2025. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Why is the U.S. investigating India?

What allegations has the U.S. made on excess capacity and forced labour? How do the two Section 301 investigations relate to the current U.S. tariff regime? What issues are the U.S. investigations examining and why do industry experts see them as a pathway to new tariffs?

EXPLAINER

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

The story so far:

Over the last week, the U.S. government has launched two investigations against India and several other countries in a bid to find some form of actions or policies that "are unreasonable or discriminatory and burden or restrict U.S. commerce". These investigations will likely take a few months, but could eventually result in the return of tariffs.

What is the current situation on tariffs?

The U.S. Supreme Court on February 20 ruled against the validity of U.S. President Donald Trump's use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to levy reciprocal tariffs on America's trade partners. For India, these reciprocal tariffs had been 50% from August 2025 to February 6, 2026, after which Mr. Trump reduced them to 25%.

Following the court's decision, Mr. Trump imposed a 10% tariff on imports from all countries for a period of 150 days under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974. He threatened to increase this to 15%, but has not done so.

However, he said the U.S. would use other sections of the Trade Act to levy additional tariffs.

What was the first investigation?

On March 11, the office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) said it had initiated investigations against 16 economies, including India, to see whether these economies were using excess manufacturing capacity to export to the U.S. in a manner that was hurting American businesses.

The order for investigation under Section 301(b) of the Trade Act included specific allegations against the economies

GETTY IMAGES

named – China, the European Union, Singapore, Switzerland, Norway, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Mexico, Japan, and India.

In India's case, the U.S. said the country had a bilateral trade surplus with it of $58 billion in 2025. Indian government data, however, shows that India had a merchandise trade surplus of $42.2 billion with the U.S. over this period.

"India's global goods trade surplus sectors include textiles, health, construction goods, and automotive goods," the U.S. order said. "For example, evidence suggests the solar module sector is plagued by excess capacity, including that India's current module manufacturing is nearly triple annual domestic demand."

It added that India has created "significant excess capacity" in petrochemicals, steel, and other industries.

What is the second investigation about?

A day later, the USTR announced the launch of a fresh investigation, this time on 60 countries, including India. The fresh investigation was to look into whether these countries had taken "sufficient steps" to prohibit the import of goods produced with forced labour and how the "failure to eradicate" these practices impacts U.S. workers and businesses.

This investigation, too, was under Section 301(b) of the Trade Act of 1974.

Why is Section 301(b) significant?

Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 is aimed at addressing unfair foreign practices affecting U.S. businesses. Notably, according to the website of the USTR, "Section 301 may be used to respond to unjustifiable, unreasonable, or discriminatory foreign government practices that burden or restrict U.S. commerce".

According to trade and industry experts, this "response" that has been allowed in the law is the pathway through which the Trump administration could once again levy tariffs on imports from other countries once the 150-day window for his current 10% expires.

"While its [the investigation's] impact on India's exports will be clear only after the investigation concludes, it seems the move is aimed at imposing a new tariff once the 150 days for the 10% global tariff expires," Pankaj Chadha, chairman of the Engineering Exports Promotion Council of India, said.

How did the Indian government respond?

So far, it has not responded publicly. In contrast, the European Union has already spoken strongly about it.

"We will be seeking further clarity from the U.S. on how the opening of this section 301 investigation would interact with" the EU-U.S. agreement signed last year, European Commission spokesman Olof Gill said. "The commission would respond firmly and proportionately to any breach of the joint statement commitments," he added.

How have Indian industries responded?

Mr. Chadha said that this fresh development comes over and above the existing tariffs that the steel, aluminium, auto, and auto components sectors still have to pay. The U.S. has implemented a separate 50% tariff on the import of these goods, including from India, which continues even after the Supreme Court's order.

Similarly, the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry has said that the recent developments add further uncertainty to the textiles and apparel sector, which it said is already under significant stress due to the developments in West Asia and a lack of clarity over how the U.S. tariff situation will unfold.

Ravi Sam, the Vice Chairman of industry body Texprocil, however, said there is no need for panic as these investigations will be long, drawn-out processes and will not have any immediate impact. This sentiment was echoed by trade expert and former Director General of Foreign Trade Ajay Srivastava as well.

THE GIST

- The U.S. has launched two investigations under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 against India and other economies to examine practices that may be 'unreasonable or discriminatory and burden or restrict U.S. commerce'.
- One probe examines whether countries, including India, are using excess manufacturing capacity to export to the U.S. in a manner that hurts American businesses, while another looks at whether countries have taken 'sufficient steps' to prohibit imports of goods produced with forced labour.

Why is Rajasthan's property Bill drawing scrutiny?

How will the proposed law regulate property transfers in notified areas? What concerns has it triggered?

Saee Pande

The story so far:

The Rajasthan Prohibition of Transfer of Immovable Property in Disturbed Areas Bill was passed by the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly on March 6 in a voice vote. The Bill seeks to regulate property transactions in areas that the government declares as "disturbed". However, the legislation has sparked debate over its constitutional validity, potential misuse, and its broader social and economic implications.

What does the Bill propose?

Under the proposed law, Section 3(1,2) states that the State government may declare any area within the State as a 'disturbed area' if it considers that communal violence, riots, or public disorder exist or are likely to occur.

According to Section 5(1,2), once a locality is notified, any transfer of immovable property, including land, houses or commercial establishments, would require prior approval from the District Magistrate or Collector. This restriction applies to transfers by sale, gift, exchange, lease, etc. Property transactions carried out without such permission would be treated as legally invalid. Section 7 empowers the District Magistrate or Collector to conduct an inquiry to determine whether the proposed transfer is voluntary and genuine, or whether it involves coercion, intimidation or a distress sale.

Under Section 9, the law also provides penalties for property transfers carried out without the required permission. Section 10 includes provisions aimed at protecting tenants from forced or unlawful eviction in such sensitive areas. Violations of the Act (Section 12) are treated as cognisable and non-bailable offences, punishable with three to five years of imprisonment and a fine.

How does the Gujarat model compare?

The Rajasthan Bill draws comparisons with the Gujarat Disturbed Areas Act, which has its origins in a 1986 ordinance passed after severe communal riots in Ahmedabad. The law was first enacted in 1991. It was later strengthened through amendments in 2020. The law was introduced to prevent distress sales of property by minorities who, after repeated communal riots in cities such as Ahmedabad and Vadodara, felt compelled to leave their neighbourhoods and sell property at low prices.

In Ahmedabad, a large share of the Muslim population is concentrated in Juhapura, often described as the largest Muslim ghetto in western Ahmedabad, limiting the community's geographical spread. In the context of the 2020 amendments, the then Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said publicly that the intent of the law was to ensure that Hindus and Muslims remain within their own areas and do not exchange property."

What are the legal and constitutional implications?

Even though the right to property was removed as a fundamental right by the 44th Amendment to the Constitution in 1978, it remains protected under Article 300A, which states that no person can be deprived of property except by authority of law. The proposed legislation provides such authority by requiring government approval before property in notified "disturbed areas" can be transferred.

The Bill has also drawn attention in relation to Article 14, which guarantees equality before the law. Legal observers note that if the provisions disproportionately affect certain neighbourhoods or communities, the law could face scrutiny on grounds of arbitrary classification or discrimination.

What are the Opposition's concerns?

Congress questioned the Bill's communal bias. Moreover, real estate transactions in notified areas could slow down because each transfer would require administrative approval from district authorities. They also point out that vague terms such as "disturbed area" or "demographic imbalance" may leave room for broad administrative discretion. There are also concerns about the arbitrary classification of disturbed areas, the ghettoisation of communities, potential discrimination in government services, and the distortion of representation. As a result, the policy, though intended to prevent forced displacement, has been criticised for institutionalising residential separation and communal polarisation, while reinforcing existing communal boundaries in housing markets rather than promoting integration.

(Saee Pande is a freelance writer with a focus on politics, current affairs, international relations, and geopolitics)

THE GIST

- The Rajasthan Legislative Assembly has passed the Rajasthan Prohibition of Transfer of Immovable Property in Disturbed Areas Bill to regulate property transactions in areas declared 'disturbed'.
- While the government says the law will provide administrative oversight and prevent coercion or distress sales, critics warn it could increase bureaucratic oversight, allow arbitrary classification of disturbed areas, and reinforce communal segregation in housing markets.

From Page One

BJP accused of trying to poach Odisha Congress legislators

KPCC president and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar with Congress MLAs from Odisha. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Ashok Kumar Das, Deputy Leader of the Congress Legislature Party in Odisha, lodged a complaint with the police. "On March 15, four persons met a few of our MLAs and allegedly attempted to bribe them with crores of rupees each to cross-vote in favour of a candidate. When our MLAs rejected their offer, the individuals allegedly threatened to kill us if we returned to Odisha. They also used abusive and filthy language against us," the complaint alleged.

Alert Congress workers managed to nab two of them – identified as Birendra Prasad and Byatarayanapura Suresh – and handed them over to the police, even as the other two managed to flee. The complaint names four persons – Byatarayanapura Suresh, a local BJP leader from Chickballapur, who booked rooms in the same resort and three others from Odisha – Birendra Prasad, Ajith Kumar Sahu, and Simachal Mohakud.

Blank cheques recovered

Mr. Shivakumar alleged that the accused had brought two blank cheques, which had been recovered and handed over to the police. He alleged that the cheques were from the BJP. "Four persons booked rooms in the same hotel where the Congress legislators were staying. The rooms were booked with the assistance of one Byatarayanapura Suresh. They entered the premises and met one of the legislators and offered ₹5 crore to each vote," Mr. Shivakumar told presspersons here. "The persons who were caught have accepted that they had come for the same purpose (offering money to legislators)," he claimed.

Following this, both Mr. Shivakumar and the eight Congress MLAs met All India Congress Committee president Mallikarjun Kharge at his residence in Bengaluru.

Byelections for Davangere South, Bagalkot seats could witness a stiff fight

The Assembly bypolls, which will be held on April 9, have been necessitated following the death of Shamanur Shivashankarappa and H.Y. Meti; the counting of votes will take place on May 4

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The announcement of byelections to Davangere South and Bagalkot Assembly constituencies on April 9, the two Assembly seats held by the ruling Congress, is set to ignite an intense fight between the Congress – keen to retain the seats – and the BJP that expects a victory to be a vote against the dispensation. The counting of votes will take place on May 4.

The byelection has been necessitated following the death of two former Ministers, Shamanur Shivashankarappa and H.Y. Meti, and the announcement comes in the midst of the Budget session, which will end on March 27.

With the last date for filing nominations being March 23, both the ruling and the Opposition parties have a little over a week to finalise the candidates and prevent any possible rebellion within their ranks. The last date for withdrawal of nomination is March 26. A win here will give victorious candidates two years tenure with the next Assembly elections scheduled in 2028.

For the Congress, the byelection comes at a time when the party is gripped by confusion over the leadership between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, who is covertly pushing for a change. Besides the BJP's narrative against the government over a lack of development at the cost of funding guarantees, the ruling party is now stuck over the issue of internal reservation among the Scheduled Castes, and reduction of reservation to Scheduled Tribes.

Shamanur Shivashankarappa

H.Y. Meti

Bypoll schedule

Byelection to be held on **April 9**
Last date for filing nominations **March 23**
Counting of votes **May 4**
Date for withdrawal of candidature **March 26**

Since the 1999 election, the fortunes in Bagalkot have swung both ways, with the BJP winning four of the six elections held so far. Former Minister and five-time legislator late H.Y. Meti, who had earlier won from Guledgudda, won the 2013 and 2023 elections. In Davangere South, a new constituency formed after the delimitation in 2008, veteran Congress leader and former Minister late Shamanur Shivaranakappa won all the four elections held since then.

The Congress is witnessing an intense fight over the ticket in Davangere South, where the deceased leader's family is keen on the ticket being provided to a family member. Mines and Horticulture Minister and son of the deceased leader, S.S. Mallikarjun, represents Davangere North constituency, while his wife, Prabha Mallikarjun, represents Davangere Lok Sabha constituency. A section of Muslim leaders in the party, however, is keen on fielding a Muslim candidate in the constituency, considering a high concentration of Muslims in the constituency. Mr. Mallikarjun has already aired his displeasure publicly against this and has been critical of Housing Minister B.Z. Zameer Ahmed Khan, who is believed to be lobbying for a Muslim candidate. The Congress leaders will have to do a tightrope walk in selection of a candidate.

The selection of candidates in Bagalkot is being narrowed down to the family members, with late Meti's two sons and two daughters being aspirants. The family members are believed to have conveyed to the party leadership that the family would work unitedly for the candidate of the leadership's choice. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said that the party is ready to face the byelections.

With respect to the Opposition, these two constituencies are being fought by the BJP as the JD(S) does not have a dominant presence here. The BJP has already commenced poll preparations by appointing in-charge leaders for both constituencies and holding preliminary meetings. The names of the probable candidates, too, have been forwarded by the party's State core committee to the Centre which will take the final call.

CORRIDORS OF POWER

'Are officials playing golf?'

The Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party on Friday took a swipe at the State government, sarcastically asking whether senior officials were busy "playing golf and spending time in clubs" instead of assisting Ministers in answering questions in the Legislative Assembly.

Leader of the Opposition R. Ashok *(in picture)* raised the issue after several unstarred questions went unanswered during the session.

He criticised the functioning of the House, saying that Chief Whip Ashok Pattan appeared to be acting only for Chief Minister Siddaramaiah by constantly accompanying him. Despite repeated warnings from Speaker U.T. Khader, Ministers heading various departments failed to provide replies, with the responsibility largely attributed to senior officials. Of the 133 unstarred questions, only 50 were answered on Friday. Expressing concern over the situation, senior BJP member S. Suresh Kumar suggested to Home Minister G. Parameshwara that a State Cabinet sub-committee be constituted to examine the issue and submit a report. Another BJP member, S. Sunil Kumar, made a tongue-in-cheek proposal to set up a committee headed by H.N. Nagamohan Das to probe the reasons behind the denial of answers to questions. An upset Mr. Khader warned Ministers not to take his silence for granted and directed the Deputy Speaker to examine the matter.

Upset over meagre funds

MLAs from the Billava/Ediga community, cutting across party lines, expressed dissatisfaction with the ₹10 crore allocation to the Sri Narayana Guru Development Corporation. Opposition members argued that while the government allocates hundreds of crores to development corporations for dominant communities such as the Lingayat and Vokkaliga, the allocation to the Sri Narayana Guru Corporation was inadequate. They demanded that the amount be increased to at least ₹100 crore in the State Budget.

Minister for Backward Classes Shivaraj Tangadagi countered the criticism, stating that the previous BJP government had only created the Sri Narayana Guru Development Cell, while the Congress government upgraded it into a full-fledged corporation. BJP members, including Mr. Sunil Kumar, argued that the community is spread across 12 districts and deserved higher funding. Congress MLA Belur Gopalakrishna supported the demand for increased allocation. The Minister finally assured the House that additional funds would be provided.

Row over decorating chariot

A political dispute over decorating the chariot during the annual Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Rathotsava in Holenarasipur recently created tension between supporters of former Minister and JD(S) leader H.D. Revanna and those of Congress MP Shreyas Patel.

The two differed over who should offer the ceremonial cloth used to decorate the chariot. Traditionally, Mr. Revanna has been offering the cloth for decoration. His supporters insisted that the same practice be followed this year, while supporters of Mr. Patel argued that their leader should offer the cloth this time.

The dispute escalated into protests by supporters of both leaders on March 3, giving the issue a political dimension. Mr. Revanna criticised the Hassan Deputy Commissioner, alleging that the officer ignored a decision taken at a meeting he had chaired. The district administration eventually intervened and decided that the chariot would be decorated with only flowers, and the ceremonial cloth would not be used this year, bringing the controversy to an end.

Nagesh Prabhu
Sathish G.T.

'Govt. unable to tell its allies their actions are impacting India'

WEST ASIA CONFLICT

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Former External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid on Sunday said that the ongoing conflicts around the world are impacting India; however, the government is not able to tell its allies that their actions are hurting India.

Participating in a discussion on, "Has Trump 2.0 Commandeered India's Foreign Policy? Reimagining India's Role in the New Geo-Political Context", here, Mr. Khurshid said that the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Iran and Israel war and what happened in Gaza and Palestine are impacting India.

"Now if we can't even tell our friends that something is wrong and we believe it is wrong and that wrong is hurting us as well then what are friendships for," Mr. Khurshid said.

He added that there is no consultation and communication between the government and the Opposition, which was a standard practice with all the previous Prime Ministers. "It was a standard practice that whatever you did, you projected a single voice across the world that was a common voice of the Opposition and the ruling party. That does not happen now. There is no consultation or communication. You don't even debate in Parliament. You don't know what the government is thinking and what it is doing. The government takes a position and they indicate that they don't want to share," he added.

Former External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid speaking at an event at Bangalore International Centre in Bengaluru on Sunday. ALLEN EGENUSE J.

Former Foreign Secretary Nirupama Menon Rao said that India's relationship with Iran is civilisational and that India should have spoken a little more and deplored the sinking of the Iranian ship IRIS Dena off the coast of Sri Lanka on March 4.

"India, being the largest country in the region, has always spoken about being the guardian of the Indian Ocean, and I am talking about the current government speaking about those terms. So when that tragedy happened, we could have afforded to say a little more," she said.

"The American gaze on India is far more unsentimental than it ever was and it is demonstrated by the Trumpian tariffs. He sees tariffs as the panacea for all ills but it goes beyond that. It truly inflicts pain on people, it causes damage, it does harm to our economy," she added.

> Now if we can't even tell our friends that something is wrong and that wrong is hurting us then what are friendships for
>
> **SALMAN KHURSHID**
> Former External Affairs Minister

To a question on India's image in the neighbourhood and if it still has friends, Suhasini Haidar, Diplomatic Editor, The Hindu, said India is circled by neighbours that are always in some kind of trouble.

She said that India's neighbours have a deep sense of admiration for India and it is seen as an exemplar of certain values like secularism and pluralism.

"In every one of our neighbours, there is a deep sense of admiration for what India had become, and it was equally a sense of admiration for the values that they themselves did not necessarily have. Secularism and pluralism were seen with admiration even in a very Islamic Pakistan and Bangladesh," she said.

She added that many of India's neighbours have a majoritarian population and a dominant religion, however the fact that India remains secular has been a point of admiration.

"I still believe India is a deeply secular country, a country that cherishes pluralism, but I do think questions are being asked now about our nature of pluralism. Questions have been asked about our democracy again, a point of admiration when you had military dictatorship or other kind or quasi authoritarianism in the neighbourhood and even if they were very popular in their countries they still look to India, look at our democratic and electoral processes with a matter of pride," she added.

D.K. Suresh calls for probe into pricing of milk by quick commerce platforms

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

D.K. Suresh, former MP and president of Bangalore Milk Union Ltd. (Bamul), has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to investigate the predatory pricing of milk by quick commerce platforms and its impact on dairy farmers and cooperative institutions.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, Mr. Suresh sought to draw attention to the recent promotional campaign by Flipkart Minutes, advertising milk at ₹1 per half litre as part of a customer acquisition campaign. "Milk is not an ordinary retail product. It is a livelihood-linked agricultural commodity produced daily by millions of small and marginal dairy farmers who depend on milk sales as a stable source of income. The advertised sale price of ₹1 per litre appears to be significantly below the economic cost of procurement, processing, packaging, transportation, cold-chain management, and retail distribution of milk," he added.

Mr. Suresh said that this raised concerns under Section 4 of the Competition Act, 2002, which prohibits abuse of dominant position. While promotional pricing is common in competitive markets, the use of extreme below-cost pricing in essential agricultural commodities raises important competition law concerns, he added. He has sought probe into deep discounting practices in the sale of milk and other farmer-produced essential commodities by quick commerce platforms.

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

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Office of the Chief Engineer (UWP), 5th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K. G. Road, Bangalore-09.

Division	IFT Number	Amount Put to Tender / EMD Amount	Last Date & Time for submission of tender	Date & Time for opening of tender
(WWM-P) H & A Valley	BWSSB/EE(WWM-P) H&AV/AEE(WWM-P-H&AV)-1/AE/2074/2025-26 Date : 11.03.2026	Rs.91,20,000/- / Rs.82,400/-	23-03-2026 upto 5.00 p.m.	24-03-2026 at 5.00 p.m.
	BWSSB/EE(WWM-P)-H&AV/AEE(WWM-P-H&AV)-2/AE/2072/2025-26 Date : 11.03.2026	Rs.79,80,000/- / Rs.1,59,600/-	23-03-2026 upto 4.30 p.m.	24-03-2026 at 5.00 p.m.

Sd/- Executive Engineer (WWM-P) H&A Valley

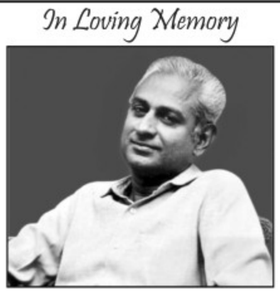
The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** For further details contact the signed office during working hours.

DIPR/CP/AAPL/RO6243/25-26

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

In Loving Memory



GOPALAN NARAYANAN
Senior Advocate, Chennai
1 December 1935 – 13 March 2026

With gratitude for a life beautifully lived, we celebrate the memory and peaceful passing of Gopalan Narayanan (GN), aged 90, Senior Advocate, Chennai, on 13th March 2026 in Montreal, Canada, surrounded by his loving family.

A man of profound wisdom and a generously helpful spirit, GN was cherished for his warmth, his humour, and his remarkable ability to bring stories to life.

Beloved husband of **Gopi Yasoda.** Loving father of **Ashwin, Anupama** and **Aparna**; father-in-law of **Reena, Richard** and **Aanand.**
Cherished grandfather of **Dhruv, Tejas, Tara, Aarya, Saira** and **Ved.**

May he rest in eternal peace.

IN MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONES
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REUTERS

What makes some locations on Google Maps look blurry or difficult to navigate?

Several countries resist being clearly mapped on Google Maps because they fear that detailed satellite imagery could lead to the targeting of critical infrastructure or planning for potential attacks; better quality satellite and mapping data make navigation easier and safer for users

Sahana Venugopal

The experience of using Google Maps is different in certain locations. While you may get turn-by-turn driving instructions and street-level views with the tap of your finger in several countries, other locations may look blurry and are difficult to navigate by road. A user's Google Maps experience is often linked to regulations in particular countries that curtail the use of satellite imaging and geographic surveys. This raises a set of questions about security and transparency.

Which countries resist being mapped, and why?

Several countries that have hostile relations with their neighbours or militant groups tend to resist being clearly mapped on Google's navigation system. They fear that making detailed satellite imagery of their land easily available to users could lead to the targeting of critical infrastructure or planning for potential attacks.

Countries like India, Israel, and South Korea have, over time, changed their tone on mapping. And these changes date back to a couple of decades earlier.

For instance, in 2007, the BBC reported that India had asked Google to lower the level of detail in some Google Earth images, for security reasons. Nearly a decade later, in 2016, India resisted Google's request for ground-level photographs for its Street View offering. Street View only returned to the country in 2022. But, in late 2025, Google announced that it was boosting its Maps service with Gemini AI, allowing people to get personalised travel advice and ask questions. The company noted then that it had data for about 35 million places in India.

Israel is another country that poses a quandary to Google Maps users. Zoom lightly into multiple parts of Israel and you are likely to be met by extremely blurry houses and out-of-focus manmade structures, or blurred out areas adjoined to far more discernible zones. Near Gaza, however, users can zoom in to clearly see the devastating aftermath of Israel's military action, such as the detailed rubble of the ruined Jabalia refugee camp market.

Israel's blurriness in Google Maps was previously due to a U.S. law known as the Kyl-Bingaman Amendment, which restricted the clarity of satellite images that show Israel and areas surrounding it. Enforced in 1997, it stipulated a resolution limit of two metres in Ground Sampling Distance (GSD), which measures how on-screen pixels translate to actual distances on the ground. In other words, a higher GSD value yields a less detailed and more blurry map, because less data is captured.

In July 2020, however, the U.S. Commerce Department published a Federal Register notice acknowledging that satellite imagery of Israel was available through other sources at a better resolution.

"The Department has therefore changed the existing resolution limit of 2.0 m GSD to 0.4 m GSD for U.S.-licensed satellite imaging of Israel," stated the notice. In essence, this meant more detailed data for satellite imagery—and a clearer look at Israel on the map.

Amnon Harari, who was the head of space programmes at Israel's Defence Ministry, was quoted by Reuters that month as saying that it was "always preferable to be seen blurred, rather than precisely."

Despite the change in regulations, multiple locations in Israel are still blurred on Google Maps, though not necessarily on other mapping/navigation platforms.

Several other countries have blurred out specific areas or particular landmarks on Google Maps, largely for security reasons, such as Interpol in France. On the other hand, entire patches of central Greenland and Antarctica are also difficult to explore in detail on Google Maps, with reasons for this including their climate.

South Korea, meanwhile, has pushed back against Google's requests for better map data. In a translated statement from last year, the company noted that international tourists faced "great inconvenience upon entering the country," claiming that the directions function of Google Maps was not available in Korea. Travellers instead use a local offering like Naver, which is restricted to showing South/North Korea and parts of their neighbouring countries. However, Google claimed that it was only requesting "safe" data, or a "national basic map' on a scale of 1:5000."

Finally, after years of dialogue and negotiations, Google claimed its victory. In late February, it was announced that the internet giant would be allowed to export high-precision map data to servers located overseas.

Google's Vice President Cris Turner said the company looked forward to bringing a "fully functioning Google Maps to Korea," per media statements. However, Korea's government expects Google to fulfil its security conditions, such as blurring sensitive facilities, and not fully revealing the longitude and latitude coordinates for South Korean territory, reported Reuters. This easing of restrictions was a condition that the Trump administration had reportedly pushed for, per media outlets.

How does greater mapping freedom affect Google and its users?

Google has explained that it uses techniques, including photogrammetry, to create its satellite-view of Maps, or a process where it puts together (satellite) imagery sourced from external providers. These include state agencies, geological survey organisations and commercial imagery providers, according to a Google blogpost from 2020.

From the company's perspective, better quality data of popular, frequently visited places – such as South Korea – makes navigation easier and safer for those using Google Maps in such locations. Accurate satellite data also plays a crucial role in journalism and activism; images of Gaza rubble from multiple platforms were used to raise international awareness about Israel's widespread bombing of civilian homes, even as the country insisted that it was targeting Hamas with precision.

Widening access to high-quality, verifiable satellite imagery is also helpful when detecting falsified images. Take the case of a satellite image published by *Tehran Times*, which claimed to show a destroyed U.S. base in Qatar, during the U.S.-Iran war this month. However, researchers soon identified this as an AI-edited fake image.

When Google Maps can obtain better satellite/mapping data, there is a definite benefit for its business as well. Once key cities and international hubs are mapped out in detail, this can ease the way for Google parent Alphabet to potentially deploy its Waymo robotaxis there while using its own navigational data, rather than depending on a third-party navigation company's technology.

However, some South Korean experts have raised antitrust concerns, noting that Google's enhanced access to Korea's map data could make it harder for local companies like Naver to compete and hold their own against an international giant.

As Google continues to juggle the navigational needs of billions of users with the security requests of their governments, the integrity of satellite images on Maps is not just a technology challenge, but an urgent geopolitical issue.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Here is a quiz to mark the birth centenary of Jerry Lewis, one of Hollywood's most famous comedians

V. V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1
Jerry Lewis was born into a vaudeville family but it was not his christened surname. What was it?

QUESTION 2
Name Lewis' legendary partner from 1946 to 1956 with whom he dominated the entertainment scene and generated a level of fan hysteria that wouldn't be seen again until the Beatles.

QUESTION 3
Lewis is widely credited with developing and pioneering which film-making technology while directing '*The Bellboy*'?

QUESTION 4
In the 1963 classic '*The Nutty Professor*', what is the name of the title character who transforms into the suave Buddy Love?

QUESTION 5
Which Oscar-winning director helmed the '*The King of Comedy*' which had Lewis delivering an acclaimed performance as a kidnapped late-night talk show host Jerry Langford?

QUESTION 6
What did Jerry Lewis sport to contort his face for his signature 'idiot' persona whom he affectionately called 'The Kid'?

Visual Question:
Identify this legendary Indian actor whose style of comedy was largely inspired by Jerry Lewis. THE HINDU ARCHIVES

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Which 14th-century historical event is often linked to the superstition surrounding Friday the 13th? **Ans: The mass arrest of the Knights Templar ordered by Philip IV of France on October 13, 1307**
2. What specific term refers to the fear of Friday the 13th itself? **Ans: Paraskevidekatriaphobia**
3. Which calendar condition must occur for a Friday the 13th to appear in a given month? **Ans: The month must begin on a Sunday**
4. What is the maximum number of Friday the 13ths that can occur in a single year? **Ans: Three**
5. In the Gregorian calendar cycle, how many times can Friday the 13th occur in a 400-year period? **Ans: 688 times**
Visual: What is the name of the masked killer who became the central figure of the Friday the 13th horror franchise? **Ans: Jason Voorhees**
Early Birds: K.N. Viswanathan | Sunil Madhavan | Prodosh Mitra | Shailbala Kumari | Keshav Raturi

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

The normally dour manager finally smiled

When she heard the news, her reaction was anything but happy

S. Upendran

What is the meaning and origin of 'make hay while the sun shines'? (K Sankara, Hyderabad)
This relatively old idiom, which has been part of the English language for several centuries, is mostly used in informal contexts. When you tell someone to 'make hay while the sun shines', what you are suggesting is that the individual should make good use the favourable circumstances that have come his way; he should get to work immediately, and achieve his goal, for such an opportunity may not present itself again. He must make use of the opportunity before it disappears.

Suddenly, there's a great demand for used cars. Our dealership is making hay while the sun shines.

The word 'hay' is mostly used to refer to the grass that is cut and then dried during summer. It is later used to feed cattle during the winter months. To ensure there was enough hay to feed his cattle during the long winter months, a farmer had to dry enough grass during the summer months. The notorious summer weather in England made this rather difficult to do. It rained quite frequently during summer in England, and this often ruined the freshly cut grass left out to dry – making it unusable for livestock. Farmers had to ensure that they made use of the opportunities when the sun was out.

What is the difference between 'all but' and 'anything but'? (Kirtiraj Singh, Rajasthan)
The expression 'all but' has a couple different meanings. One of them is 'almost'. Here are a few examples.

The children had all but given up hope of seeing their puppy again.

The outcome of tonight's game is all but certain.

In the first sentence, you are saying that the kids had nearly or almost given up hope of seeing their puppy again. The second sentence suggests that you are almost certain what the outcome of tonight's match will be.

The expression can also be used to mean 'except for'.

For the meeting, all but Raj and Vani were present.

When you say someone is 'anything but kind', you mean that he is definitely not kind. He may have one or two good qualities, but kindness is not one of them.

What is the meaning of 'dour'? How is the word pronounced? (D Alemelu, Kochi)
Dictionaries list several ways of pronouncing the word; one simple way is to make it rhyme with 'power', 'shower' and 'flower'. The word comes from the Scottish 'duurus' meaning 'hard'. Today, the word is used in formal contexts to mean gloomy and unfriendly. When you say that someone is 'dour', what you are suggesting is that the individual looks rather sad or unhappy. The word is generally used to show disapproval.

Shalini married a dour little man who never saw any good in others.
upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day

Folly:
the trait of acting stupidly or rashly

Synonyms: absurdity, blunder, foolishness

Usage: *Her folly cost the company a lot of money.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/follypro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /fɒli/

Correction
The article 'Electrifying industrial heat as a path to India's thermal independence' dated March 13, in Text & Context overstated the extent of adoption of electrified heat by Morbi's and Ludhiana's industries and misprinted India's CST capacity, which should be 6.4 GW.

Dues worth ₹23 crore cleared for paediatric surgeries under RBSK

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Bringing relief to small and medium private hospitals, the State Finance Department has approved the release of over ₹23 crore in dues pending since 2017 for paediatric surgeries carried out under the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK).

The Department last week cleared a Cabinet note proposing that the pending payments be released using available grants with the Suvarna Arogya Suraksha Trust (SAST), the nodal agency implementing the State's health schemes. The proposal now awaits Cabinet approval. This issue of prolonged delay in clearing payments to private hospitals that had performed surgeries for children under the programme had been reported by *The Hindu* in September last year.

Demanding reimbursement of the dues, private hospitals had earlier warned that they would suspend paediatric surgeries under the Ayushman Bharat Arogya Karnataka (AB-ArK) scheme if the payments were not cleared. Several hospitals had also said they were considering legal action, and some have even approached the court.

The dispute dates back to 2016, when the State introduced additional treatment codes under RBSK without prior approval from the Centre. Hospital authorities said they carried out surgeries in good faith based on the government's published codes between 2016 and 2018, but subsequent audits flagged that the procedures lacked central clearance, leaving the claims pending. Officials attributed the delay to a technical issue in the procedure listing on the SAST portal, which stalled the processing of claims.

Launched in 2013-14, RBSK aims to improve the survival, growth and development of children aged 0-18 years by screening them for the "4 Ds" – defects at birth, deficiencies, diseases, developmental delays and disabilities. Children diagnosed with illnesses are provided treatment and surgeries free of cost under the National Health Mission, including care in empanelled private hospitals where services are unavailable in government facilities.

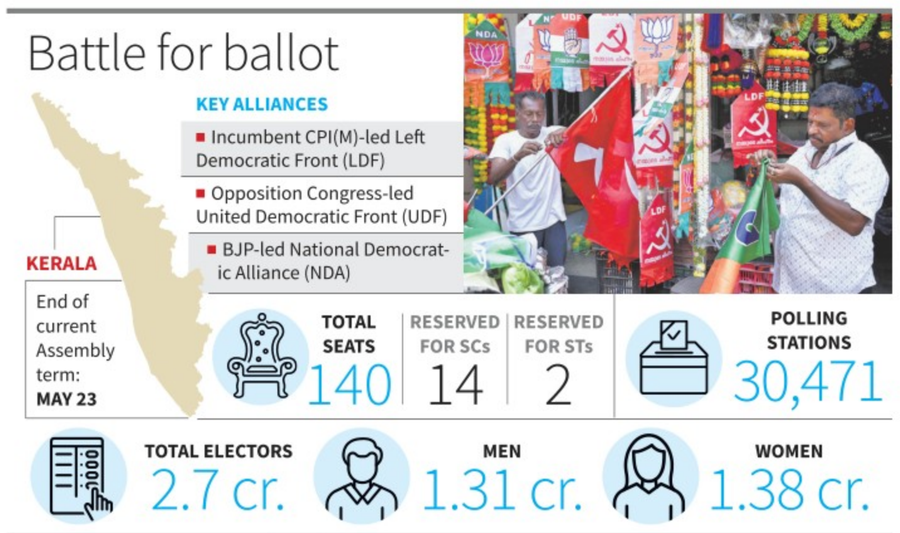
Hospital associations have maintained that the responsibility for clearing the dues rests with the State, as the procedures were introduced through its own notifications. They said the prolonged delay had placed significant financial strain on hospitals that had provided specialised care. "We are still wary about the payment and can rest only after the Cabinet clears it," said Pavan Kumar Patil, a representative of the Indian Medical Association's Karnataka chapter.

Harsh Gupta, Principal Secretary (Health), said the file will be placed in the next Cabinet and after ts approval, measures will be initiated to settle the issue.

LDF steals a march on UDF with Kerala candidate list

Ruling front workers kick off roadshows after CPI(M), CPI name 106 candidates in back-to-back press conferences; Congress and IUML hold meeting to finalise the UDF's seat-sharing formula

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



The Assembly election for 140 seats in the State will be held on April 9, with counting on May 4

The Left Democratic Front (LDF) sought to steal a march on the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF), with its two major alliance partners, the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the CPI (Marxist), announcing their candidates within an hour of the Election Commission (EC) announcing April 9 as the date for the Assembly election in Kerala.

The back-to-back press conferences by CPI(M) State secretary M.V. Govindan and CPI State secretary Binoy Viswam seemed a televised cue for scores of LDF workers organising roadshows with ruling front candidates in tow.

Key names

Mr. Govindan announced candidates for 81 seats. Among them are six CPI (M)-backed LDF candidates contesting as Independents, including in Palakkad.

The other 75 candidates will contest on party ticket, including Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, LDF convener T.P. Ramakrishnan, and Cabinet Ministers in the State government. P.K. Shyamala, All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) leader, will contest from Thaliparambu in Kannur.

Of the 81 candidates, 56 are incumbents, including former Devaswom Board Minister Kadakampally Surendran.

Speaker A.N. Shamsheer, CPI(M) State Secretariat member M. Swaraj, and Mr. Govindan are not in the fray.

Mr. Viswam said the CPI would field 25 candidates, including an Independent. Four incumbent Ministers will contest, including K. Rajan, G.R. Anil, J. Chinchurani, and P. Prasad.

The CPI decided to put up a strong fight against the Leader of the Opposition, V.D. Satheesan, in his home turf in Paravoor by fielding the incumbent MLA for Kaipamangalam, E.T. Taison. Mr. Govindan said other LDF partners, including the Kerala Congress (M), would also announce their candidates soon.

Scramble in Congress

Faced with the threat of being outpaced by the LDF in the poll campaign, the Congress-led UDF appeared to scramble to finalise seat-sharing in its own coalition on Sunday, with Mr. Satheesan and senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala holding a closed-door meeting with the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) leadership at Aluva Palace in Ernakulam.

The meeting gained importance against the backdrop of reports that the IUML has demanded a higher number of seats, including a few in central Kerala, in a bid to expand the party's political base and also demonstrate its heft in the UDF.

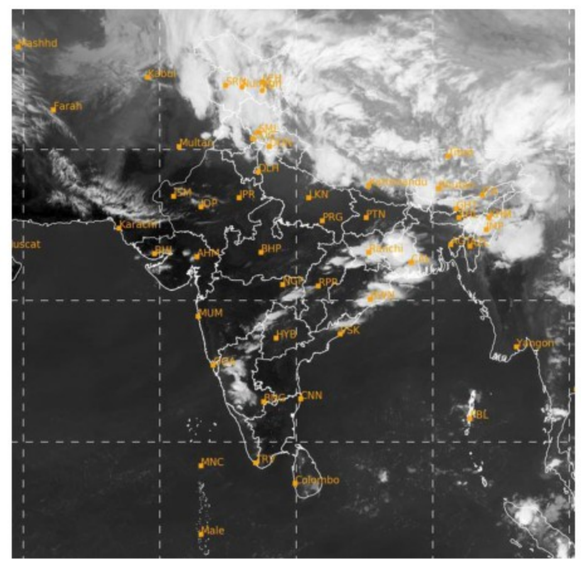
Moreover, the IUML is reportedly weighing whether to swap seats with the Congress in the Thiruvambadi, Pattambi, Kongadu, and Kalamassery constituencies.

Congress insiders said former State Congress chief and Lok Sabha member K. Sudhakaran's assertion that he would contest the Assembly election from Kannur has caused a hiccup in finalising party candidates before the AICC's Central Election Committee headed by Madhusoodhanan Mistry meets next week.

The party has also faced difficulties in choosing Assembly hopefuls, as several leaders are jockeying for seats.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Heavy Rainfall very likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Meghalaya. Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, Interior Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.3	31.7	21.4	Kozhikode	—	35.4	27.0
Ahmedabad	—	38.4	23.4	Kurnool	—	38.3	24.7
Aizawl	—	30.0	13.8	Lucknow	—	31.6	20.6
Allahabad	—	35.6	19.0	Madurai	—	38.2	24.3
Bengaluru	—	33.5	00.0	Mangaluru	—	33.4	25.4
Bhopal	—	36.4	18.6	Mumbai	—	33.2	24.0
Bhubaneswar	—	32.2	25.5	Mysuru	—	34.0	19.0
Chandigarh	—	26.5	14.8	New Delhi	0.8	28.4	18.3
Chennai	—	31.6	23.9	Patna	—	33.0	22.3
Coimbatore	—	35.4	22.4	Port Blair	—	31.4	26.8
Dehradun	—	28.5	16.8	Puducherry	—	31.8	22.2
Gangtok	0.4	16.7	11.5	Pune	—	38.2	23.1
Goa	—	33.2	26.0	Raipur	—	37.1	22.2
Guwahati	1.0	24.5	19.0	Ranchi	—	35.5	18.0
Hubballi	—	36.0	18.0	Shillong	8.0	21.6	12.5
Hyderabad	—	38.6	22.0	Shimla	—	20.0	12.0
Imphal	5.4	20.7	14.0	Srinagar	—	11.5	9.4
Jaipur	—	35.7	22.7	Thiruvananthapuram	—	34.3	23.8
Kochi	—	32.4	25.8	Tiruchi	—	36.3	24.4
Kohima	—	—	—	Vijayawada	—	35.0	23.4
Kolkata	—	30.6	25.6	Visakhapatnam	—	31.6	24.5

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.85	..80	64	... 135	...209	
Bengaluru	...4	..18	38	... 171	...154	
Chennai	...6	4	40	 30	68	
Delhi	.17	110	25	... 178	...268	
Hyderabad	.16	..15	38	 64	93	
Kolkata	...6	..36	28	 55	64	
Lucknow	...9	..22	58	... 193	...148	
Mumbai	...1	..—	24	 46	...118	
Pune	..—	..36	24	... 100	...118	
Visakhapatnam	.33	..46	15	 44	...108	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Korba, Chhattisgarh, recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 305 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Naharlagun, Arunachal Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 18.

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Anganwadi Centres to get over 40,000 induction stoves in A.P.

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has given the green signal for supplying 44,346 energy-efficient induction stoves to the Anganwadi Centres through the Women Development & Child Welfare (WD&CW) Department with the support of the Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL).

Under Phase-I, the EESL has already distributed 11,400 induction stoves to the Anganwadi Centres, according to a press release from EESL Media Adviser (South India) A. Chandra Sekhar Reddy.

Switching to 1,200-W induction stoves is projected to significantly reduce recurring LPG costs, with annual savings in Andhra Pradesh estimated to be ₹24 crore, he says. Besides, the programme is expected to prevent the release of nearly 28,327 tonnes of CO_2 into the atmosphere.

The induction cooktops are around 30% more energy-efficient than conventional LPG stoves. The initiative is in alignment with the Central government's 'Go Electric' campaign and the National Efficient Cooking Programme, Mr. Chandra Sekhar added.

Thanking the State government for supporting the NECP and taking a prompt decision to provide induction stoves, Akhilesh Kumar Dixit, CEO of Energy Efficiency Services Limited, said the move was a bold step towards protecting the environment while safeguarding the interests of women.

Telangana schools serving midday meals for now, amid LPG concerns

B. Pradeep
HYDERABAD

The Telangana School Education Department is exercising caution in view of the ongoing LPG supply crisis caused by the situation in West Asia. However, authorities said that no school has reported any issues so far.

The Consumer Affairs, Food, and Civil Supplies Department issued a government order on March 13, following a video conference with the Union government, and established both a State-level and a district-level energy supply monitoring committee. However, neither committee includes school officials as members.

District review meetings led by District Collectors have also not specifically addressed LPG supply and its impact on daily school operations. Only a few officials have stated that LPG allocation to schools will follow the priority for essential sectors.

Close to 9,000 schools in the State rely solely on LPG for the meal programme.

Review work

In one such review conducted by Nalgonda District Collector B. Chandrashekar on Saturday, he obtained details regarding available stock, gas supply and daily consumption patterns in various residential schools and hostels.

"Principals and officials from welfare departments must ensure that students in hostels, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas and residential schools face no disruption in their meals under the pretext of a gas supply shortage," he said.

According to Director of School Education E. Naveen Nicolas, no school in the State has reported any issues so far. Since the school midday meal programmes are managed by local Self-Help Groups (SHG), which fall under the domestic LPG category, supply is not affected and is given priority.

According to the department, the State has 24,972 schools, the majority being local body schools (24,219), followed by Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (495), Model Schools (194), urban residential schools (29) and Telangana Residential Educational Institutions Society schools (35).

"There are close to 9,000 schools that rely solely on LPG for the meal programme. Among them, about 4,000 are larger schools with higher student strength, while the rest are primary and upper primary schools. Some also have induction stoves," Mr. Naveen Nicolas said, adding that a comprehensive review will be conducted and an action plan released.

Most of the remaining schools depend on local firewood for midday meal preparations.

Jewellery worth ₹2 cr. missing from the palace of erstwhile royal family of Travancore

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Jewellery worth nearly ₹2 crore has been stolen in a burglary reported from the historic Kowdiar Palace in Thiruvananthapuram.

The Peroorkada police registered a case based on a complaint filed by Aswathi Thirunal Gouri Lakshmi Bayi, member of the erstwhile Travancore royal family, on Saturday.

According to the complaint, several pieces of gold and gem-studded jewellery, including antique valuables, had gone missing from an iron almirah in her bedroom at the palace.

Many of the missing items have been passed down through generations.

A view of the Kowdiar Palace in Thiruvananthapuram. FILE PHOTO

The burglary is suspected to have taken place between October 1 and November 1.

The first information report (FIR) provides a detailed inventory of the missing ornaments.

Among the stolen items are a coral-and-gold chain weighing about half a sovereign, a pair of gold anklets weighing around three sovereigns, another pair of anklets set with black stones and gold elements, weighing about two sovereigns, gold bangles, a gold nose-stud, and a gold pendant.

The case has been registered under Section 305 (theft) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

TDP MP, BRS ex-MLA 'detained after drug raid'

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Ten persons, including an MP from Andhra Pradesh and a former MLA from Telangana, were detained after narcotics were found during a raid at a farmhouse in Moinabad, Telangana on Saturday night. During the raid, officials reportedly seized about two grams of cocaine.

Those detained were Putta Mahesh Kumar, MP for Eluru representing the Telugu Desam Party (TDP); Pilot Rohith Reddy, former MLA and BRS leader; Moraganeni Ramesh, 49, a real estate businessman from Manikonda; V. Sravan Kumar, 40, a private employee from Manikonda;

Pilot Rohith Reddy

Putta Mahesh Kumar

Namith Sharma, 42, associated with a construction company and residing in Delhi; Ritesh Reddy, 40, a businessman from Manikonda and brother of Rohith Reddy; Nallapuneni Vijaya Krishna, 49, a real estate businessman from Nanakramguda; Kaushik Ravi, 39, an advocate from Gachibowli; Arjun Reddy, 34, a businessman from Nanakramguda; and K. Sarayu Reddy, 34, a resident of Himayathnagar.

Preliminary drug tests conducted on those present showed that six persons had consumed narcotics, according to authorities.

Those who tested positive included Mr. Rohith Reddy's brother Ritesh Reddy, Namith Sharma, Kaushik Ravi and Arjun Reddy, among others.

High drama unfolded during the raid, which was carried out by the Elite Action Group for Drug Law Enforcement (EAGLE) following a tip-off about a party involving narcotics at a farmhouse belonging to Mr. Rohith Reddy.

Rounds fired

Officials said the team reached the farmhouse at around 9.30 p.m. on Saturday but initially faced resistance at the entrance from security personnel and Mr. Rohith Reddy. Police said that in the commotion during the raid, Mr. Namith Sharma allegedly fired three rounds into the air using a revolver in an attempt to evade the enforcement team.

The men initially refused to cooperate with the questioning.

Investigators eventually collected gunshot residue (GSR) samples, and the tests later identified Mr. Namith Sharma as the person who discharged the weapon, which belonged to Mr. Rohit Reddy's brother Ritesh Reddy.

EAGLE Director Sandeep Shandilya said the case has been handed over to the police in Moinabad for further investigation.

Ugadi Mahotsavams in Srisailam from today

The Hindu Bureau
NANDYAL

The temple town of Srisailam, abode of Sri Bhramaramba Mallikarjuna Swamy, is buzzing with devotees ahead of the Ugadi Mahotsavams starting Monday. The festival attracts a large number of devotees from Karnataka and Maharashtra who trek through the Nallamala forest to reach Srisailam and offer prayers on the occasion of Ugadi.

On Monday, Goddess Bhramaramba will give darshan to devotees in Mahalakshmi alankaram. Brungi Vahana Seva will be performed to Lord Mallikarjuna and Goddess Bhramaramba on the first day.

On March 18, Prabhotsavam and Agnigunda Pravesam will be held. The festivities will conclude with Purnahuthi. The traditional Panchanga Sravanam will be conducted on Ugadi day March 19.

Superintendent of Police Suneel Sheoran said that 1,800 police personnel have been deployed for bandobust.

Special focus will be on management of devotees in queue lines and traffic regulation. The police will monitor the situation from the command control room.

House decorum

The ruling party and the Opposition must rise above partisanship

The Lok Sabha rejected by voice vote, on March 11, a resolution under Article 94(C) of the Constitution for the removal of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla from office, but only after a hostile debate on the functioning of the House deepened the wedge between the government and the Opposition. In principle, Parliament is the foundation of representative democracy, and its routine functions act as an instrument that holds the cabinet accountable. As a forum for government-Opposition interaction, it is meant to operate in a structured, methodical way. Single-party dominance has eroded all these formal and informal functions of legislatures at all levels, and the Lok Sabha, sadly, has become a platform for political partisanship. In recent years, the chairs of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha have been dragged into political conflict. In 2024, there was an Opposition resolution to remove Jagdeep Dhankhar as Rajya Sabha Chairman. Though the resolution did not pass, he resigned as Vice-President for unexplained reasons. The Opposition has raised concerns over the Lok Sabha's functioning, but what precipitated their protest into a formal resolution for Mr. Birla's removal was, possibly, his statement that he had confidential knowledge that Congress women MPs might act against Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the House floor.

Opposition MPs are routinely denied the opportunity to raise substantive issues, though the government cites statistics in its rebuttal. The Speaker had disallowed Leader of the Opposition (Lok Sabha) Rahul Gandhi from quoting former Army Chief M.M. Naravane's unpublished memoir, which discusses Prime Minister Narendra Modi's role in the 2020 military standoff with China. The microphones of Opposition MPs are frequently switched off during debates. The Opposition has pointed out that in February, Mr. Gandhi was interrupted 20 times while speaking during the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address and also blocked from raising the Gautam Adani investigation issue in the U.S. and the EU-U.S. trade deal. The government argued that the Opposition was given 56% of Zero Hour time, and that NDA MPs, despite their majority, received 321 supplementary questions against the Opposition's 364 during his tenure. Home Minister Amit Shah said that the House's productivity during Mr. Birla's tenure had been high and that it had debated in 14 regional languages. Mr. Shah also cornered Mr. Gandhi for being frequently absent from the House. The resolution and the debate manifested a deeply fractured polity in need of urgent corrective measures. The ruling majority and the Opposition must rise above partisanship and restore the majesty of Parliament.

Another barrier

Mandatory period leave sans parity in recruitment will hurt women

When considering a measure to address a work-related need, care must be taken to ensure that it does not inadvertently reduce the employee's opportunity to work. This was again made evident on March 13, when a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, refused to entertain a petition seeking a law providing menstrual leave for women workers and students. The Court cautioned that mandatory menstrual leave could unintentionally hinder women's careers and deny them "big responsibilities". Instead, it encouraged "voluntary" initiatives by States. In Odisha, women government employees up to the age of 55 can take an additional day of leave each month, while Kerala grants menstrual leave to female trainees in ITIs and universities. Karnataka issued an order that entitles women in the public and private sectors up to the age of 52 to a day's menstrual leave a month, raising concerns whether private establishments might be disincentivised from hiring women. This government order has been challenged in the High Court. Such changes must come with safeguards, and the top court rightly suggested that the government come up with a menstrual leave policy in consultation with stakeholders – as it had done in 2024 as well.

Many women face debilitating menstrual pain and conditions such as endometriosis, PCOD and PCOS. But the Court's reasoning rests on another, more universal reality: women are already disadvantaged at work, facing systemic barriers such as unequal pay. In this context, mandatory menstrual leave could become a form of biological determinism, limiting opportunities, pay and promotions for women. In countries where menstrual leave policies exist, they are either poorly enforced or are not opted for by most women. In Spain, legislation enacted in 2023, and hailed as "... historic ... for feminist progress", saw few women exercising the right a year later. In Zambia, some women said it was being misused. In India, the female Labour Force Participation Rate rose from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 41.7% in 2023-24, driven largely by rural women entering work due to distress, insecure employment and unpaid household work. In this context, a blanket menstrual leave policy could be counterproductive: many women cannot afford to lose workdays, and in informal jobs, it may also be unenforceable. Providing free sanitary products and medicines at workplaces and allowing time off under existing leave provisions would be a way forward. That would be an acknowledgement of biological realities without turning such well-intentioned but poorly thought-out initiatives into yet another barrier to women's participation.

Oil prices reflect geopolitical risks, not only supply

Pankaj Sharma

is a former Additional Director, Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC), Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India, and a former Chief General Manager, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), India

In the aftermath of the war in West Asia, crude oil prices surged to as high as $118 a barrel last week. Alongside rising tensions, this situation has been building for over two months. Since mid-December 2025, when Brent crude stood at $57.56, prices have surged by more than 100%. They have, however, come down since then but remain in three digits, with no immediate sign of easing.

Historically, geopolitical shocks follow a predictable pattern. There is an immediate market overreaction that is followed by gradual stabilisation as trade routes adjust. However, the global oil market is once again operating under a profound geopolitical shadow.

What has changed in the development now

The developments in West Asia, intensifying strategic rivalries among major powers, and persistent conflict-driven uncertainty have brought geopolitics back to the centre of the energy discourse. Yet, the nature of this influence has shifted. Unlike previously, where regional conflicts rarely removed Gulf barrels from the global pool, the current disruptions have created tangible barriers to supply, fundamentally altering the costs, confidence, and conditions of the oil trade.

For major importing economies such as India, this shift has significant implications. Oil security is no longer just about physical access. It is also defined by exposure to the financial, logistical, and political uncertainties surrounding every shipment.

The vulnerability of global maritime arteries is stark. Around a fifth of global oil consumption is transported through the Strait of Hormuz, and roughly a tenth of seaborne crude passes through the Bab el-Mandeb and Suez corridor. The ongoing conflict involving Israel and Iran has effectively sidelined 20% of global supplies, even in the absence of planned production cuts. The market has reacted sharply to these signals. Over the past year, Brent crude has frequently fluctuated by 5%-10% within days of military or diplomatic developments, regardless of actual production volumes. Currently, however, the impact on physical supply is so drastic that prices continue to climb without a visible peak.

Tensions do more than just inflate the price of a barrel. They make maritime unsecure. Chokepoints remain vital arteries of trade, but their significance today lies in making global machinery vulnerable. Even limited disruptions or attacks on commercial shipping can alter vessel routing and raise freight costs. These drive up freight rates; the world has seen daily rates for supertankers more than double) , affect shipping insurance premiums, and tighten vessel availability. Major container carriers have implemented emergency conflict surcharges or war risk surcharges. These escalations ripple through the supply chain, directly influencing landed import prices.

As tensions rise and oil volatility grows, importing nations will need adaptable energy and trade strategies

It is about politics

Furthermore, oil has been transformed from a mere commodity into a political instrument. The redirection of Russian crude following the Ukraine conflict illustrates this dynamic. Although Russia maintained export volumes by pivoting to Asian markets, the shift introduced longer shipping routes, complex payment arrangements, and evolving compliance frameworks. What appeared stable in volume was highly volatile in operational and financial terms.

For importing countries, this creates a dual exposure. Price volatility is no longer driven solely by the supply-demand balance but by changes in geopolitical sentiment. Markets respond to diplomatic signals, military developments and regulatory announcements with a speed that often exceeds the pace of actual trade flows. This weakens the historical relationship between production levels and consumer prices.

The growing role of financial markets amplifies geopolitical sentiment, as oil is traded not only as a physical commodity but also as a financial asset through futures, options, and derivatives. During periods of stress, investors use oil as both an inflation hedge and a risk-sensitive instrument. This explains why speculative positions often expand even when physical inventories are comfortable – prices reflect expectations and portfolio behaviour rather than immediate scarcity.

Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPRs) have also evolved. Originally intended to address physical supply interruptions, they are now deployed to counter psychological volatility in the market. For instance, G-7 leaders have announced the release of 400 million barrels of oil in response to the war in West Asia (which is said to be about 20 days of the usual oil traffic through the Strait of Hormuz). The goal is to stabilise market sentiment as much as it is to provide physical barrels. The news of these discussions recently prompted a sell-off, easing Brent and West Texas Intermediate gains to some extent.

Major powers shape this environment in different ways. The United States, now one of the world's largest producers of various petroleum products, influences markets through its strategic stock policies and diplomatic engagement with producers.

Meanwhile, Asia has become the primary centre of demand growth, accounting for the majority of incremental oil consumption over the past decade. Producer coordination through organisations such as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries continues to influence supply management, but its impact now interacts with geopolitical risk premia embedded in prices.

The continuing relevance of oil

The energy transition adds another layer of complexity. While renewable energy and electric mobility are expanding, oil remains central to the transport, aviation and petrochemicals sectors/industries. Global oil demand still exceeds 105 million barrels per day, and petrochemicals account for a rising share of incremental consumption. This produces a segmented market: one part linked to declining fuel use, another tied to industrial growth. Thus, geopolitics continues to exert influence over a commodity whose strategic relevance is changing but not disappearing.

For India, where oil demand is not expected to peak soon and is projected to drive much of global growth, this environment highlights the need for adaptability rather than alarm. The ability to process diverse crude grades, source from multiple geographies and maintain strategic reserves provides buffers against instability. Equally crucial is building commercial and financial expertise to navigate complex trading arrangements. Energy policy, in this sense, must integrate diplomacy, maritime awareness and market analytics.

This evolving structure complicates the notion of energy security. It now requires resilience not only against supply disruptions but also against financial and logistical shocks. Payment systems, shipping insurance, and contract enforcement have become integral to the energy security architecture.

The broader lesson is that oil has entered a phase where risk is as significant as the resource itself. Geopolitics will continue to influence oil prices by shaping perceptions of safety, reliability, and continuity, as well as affecting the physical flow of oil. Understanding this transformation is essential for managing a vulnerable world. Stability now depends on preserving predictable trade mechanisms and avoiding diplomatic ruptures that amplify uncertainty. In the years ahead, the resilience of importing nations will depend both on the origin of their crude and on how effectively they manage the political and financial currents surrounding every barrel of oil.

Building India's climate resilience with water at the core

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Branded the "COP of Implementation," COP 30, the 30th session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Belém, Brazil, in November 2025, marked a decisive shift in how adaptation is understood – not as an abstract promise of resilience, but as a measurable, accountable discipline grounded in systems that function under stress. At the centre of this shift is 'water', moving from the margins of infrastructure planning to the core of climate survival. For the first time, global adaptation indicators integrated water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) into climate accountability, reshaping the water-food-climate nexus with implications for all countries, including India.

Climate change felt through water

Climate change is experienced most viscerally through water. Floods submerge cities, droughts hollow out rural economies, glacial melt destabilises Himalayan river systems, saline intrusion contaminates coastal aquifers, and erratic monsoons disrupt food security. Agriculture alone accounts for roughly 40% of anthropogenic methane emissions, with rice cultivation, livestock systems, and organic waste at the centre of the challenge. So, water use efficiency, wastewater reuse, aquifer recharge, and resilient sanitation systems are now climate strategies as much as development priorities.

The 59 Belém Adaptation Indicators, under the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience, signal a new discipline in global governance. Two clusters stand out. The first focuses on climate-resilient water and sanitation systems: reducing climate-induced water scarcity, building resilience to floods and droughts, ensuring universal access to safe drinking water, and upgrading sanitation infrastructure to withstand extreme events. The second emphasises risk governance: universal multi-hazard early warning systems by 2027, strengthened hydrometeorological services, and updated national vulnerability assessments by 2030. Water security is no longer about asset creation; it is about whether systems continue to deliver when climate stress intensifies.

Guided by the Belém indicators, India can set an example for the Global South by making water systems resilient

Not starting from scratch

India is building on existing foundations. The consolidation, in 2019, of water governance under the Ministry of Jal Shakti marked a shift toward integrated stewardship, while the Water Vision 2047 aligns with Belém's adaptation framework, emphasising sustainability, equity, and resilience.

Groundwater management illustrates this transition. The evolution of the National Aquifer Mapping and Management (NAQUIM) Programme 2.0 has moved from mapping aquifers to implementing aquifer-level management plans (hydrogeological knowledge to policy action), exemplifying the systems integration that global adaptation indicators now require.

River rejuvenation tells a similar story. The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has moved beyond sewage treatment to integrate biodiversity, digital monitoring, and international collaboration, making clean rivers a buffer against climate volatility.

Despite visible progress, three systemic risks threaten to slow momentum. First, water scarcity remains acute and unevenly distributed. Most climate disasters in India are water-related, and WASH systems often serve as the first line of defence. Ensuring rural and urban water supply during floods or prolonged droughts would require climate stress testing of infrastructure, diversification of sources, and redundancy in service delivery – not simply expanding coverage figures.

Second, adaptation finance remains fragile. While global rhetoric speaks of mobilising $1.3 trillion annually by 2035, operational pathways remain uncertain. Without predictable and accessible flows of adaptation finance, post-disaster recovery will crowd out long-term resilience planning. Water projects need explicit classification and funding as climate investments, not mere sectoral costs.

Third, digital fragmentation persists. Despite India's vast hydrological and meteorological data, an Artificial Intelligence-driven real-time integration into planning, budgeting, and local governance systems remains limited.

A closer look at India's institutional landscape reveals that most global adaptation targets already have corresponding domestic missions. Drinking water coverage, sanitation expansion, irrigation efficiency, urban water reforms, and climate action plans exist across Ministries and States. Climate stress indicators must be embedded into mission dashboards.

Belém calls for convergence, not reinvention. India's strength in digital public infrastructure offers an opportunity to integrate hydrological data, crop advisories, insurance and financial flows into interoperable platforms for real-time decision-making.

Belém indicators guide climate survival

The Belém indicators are not a bureaucratic checklist; they are a dashboard for survival. If implemented with seriousness, they can transform adaptation from a peripheral conversation into the organising principle of development strategy. India stands at a pivotal moment. Its domestic water reforms, technological capabilities, and community-led initiatives position it not just as a participant in global climate negotiations but also as a potential leader in operationalising adaptation at scale.

Water must anchor climate action. Implementation must be swift, equitable, and technologically robust. Resilience should be measured not by infrastructure built, but by systems that continue to serve people when the next flood arrives, when the next drought lingers, and when the next climate shock tests the nation's preparedness. India has much of the blueprint in place. India should align its missions, metrics and money quickly enough to convert ambition into measurable resilience – and in doing so, lead the Global South by its exemplary performance.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Poll bugle sounded

The announcement of the election dates for Assembly polls in West Bengal, Kerala/Keralam, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Puducherry, marks a key moment for democracy. It is important that these elections are conducted in a peaceful, transparent and fair manner so that every citizen can cast their vote without fear or pressure. The role of the Election Commission of India becomes extremely crucial in maintaining fairness and ensuring that all rules and regulations are properly followed. At the same time, political parties should focus on healthy debates, development issues and constructive policies instead of spreading hatred, misinformation or creating unnecessary conflict during their election campaigning. Responsible campaigning will help voters make better decisions and strengthen democratic values.

Aarchi Verma,
Rajpura, Punjab

Institutions, scrutiny

Our democracy confronts an unusual moment: challenges to two of its most consequential constitutional offices — the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chief Election Commissioner — that prompts a reflection on the resilience and the vulnerabilities of our institutional design. Perhaps the very emergence of such challenges would testify to the robustness of democratic culture, when institutions are openly scrutinised and when public debate engages even the highest offices. That said, the frequency and intensity of such confrontations risk signalling a gradual erosion of trust in institutions that depend heavily on perceived and demonstrable neutrality. A question follows. Which lapse would inflict the greater injury on democracy — an election widely doubted for its fairness, or a legislature whose procedural guardrails weaken? Either scenario chips away at public confidence, though electoral credibility arguably forms the foundational pillar of the democratic order. The test for any democracy is not the absence of institutional strain but its capacity to confront such stress without corroding the public faith that sustains it.

R. Narayanan,
Navi Mumbai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

On the right to die with dignity

Satvik Varma

is a senior advocate in New Delhi. With inputs from Shantanu Parmar, advocate

On an evening in 2013, 20-year-old Harish Rana fell from the fourth floor of his PG accommodation and sustained critical injuries. His condition confined him to a bed while tubes kept him on life support. Owing to his Persistent Vegetative State (PVS), he responded to no stimuli around him and was largely nursed by his parents, with frequent visits to the hospital. Mr. Rana's closest friends and family, who fondly describe him as energetic and exuberant, were faced with the agonising pain of witnessing his stasis. His parents, along with the doctors, devoted 13 years in tending to Mr. Rana, but no improvement was seen. Confronted with such despairing circumstances, the parents moved the Supreme Court to withdraw life support, so that nature can be allowed to take its course. What followed was a pivotal discourse on the import of life under Article 21 of our Constitution.

A respectable death

The Constitution's tryst with 'Right to Life with dignity' was first laid down in *Gian Kaur vs State of Punjab* (1996) where the Supreme Court held that 'life' under Article 21 included the right to live with dignity. However, in *Gian Kaur*, the Court opined that Article 21 did not include the right to die.

Fifteen years later, a similar case reached the Supreme Court when a young Aruna Shanbaug, owing to a brutal sexual assault, was left in PVS. Pinki Virani, journalist, and human-rights activist, petitioned the Supreme Court as Aruna's friend for withdrawal of her life support. Although under its own circumstances, Virani's plea was rejected, it culminated in the crucial decision of *Aruna R. Shanbaug vs Union of India* (2011). The Supreme Court drew sustenance from foreign legal frameworks and recognised passive euthanasia in cases of patients with terminal illness and undergoing prolonged, but ineffective treatment. Guidelines were framed to bridge the legislative gap, until Parliament promulgated on the subject. Additionally, the Law Commission in 2006 and 2012, entered into an in-depth examination of the above-detailed issues and made extensive observations. It reported that withholding life support from terminally ill patients should not attract criminal liability if done in pursuance of the "best interest of the patient."

The watershed moment on the subject was the 2018 Constitution Bench's decision in *Common Cause vs Union of India*. Armed with developing jurisprudence on the subject, the Supreme Court unequivocally recognised and permitted the withdrawal/withholding of medical treatment to fall within Article 21. The right of refusal of medical treatment was held to be a manifestation of dignity intersecting with privacy, autonomy, and self-determination. This judgment provided extensive guidelines and underwent certain modifications in a similarly titled 2023 decision. These are now cumulatively referred to as the 'Common Cause guidelines', which rest on two core principles: first, that the intervention in question must qualify as "medical treatment"; and second, that its withdrawal must be strictly in the patient's "best interest."

The Supreme Court embedded various safeguards to prevent misuse and a detailed procedure involving opinions of primary and secondary Medical Boards prior to undertaking such decisions. The legislative void was once again highlighted by the Court and one Judge expressed the "pious hope" for legislative intervention. This hope still lingers.

The right of refusal of medical treatment was held to be a manifestation of dignity intersecting with privacy, autonomy, and self-determination

Case evaluation

The Harish Rana chronicle has now reached its end with the intervention by the Supreme Court. Speaking through two judges, who authored separate but concurring judgments, the Court allowed the withdrawal of life support from Mr. Rana under the Common Cause guidelines. Since he relied on Clinically Assisted Nutrition and Hydration (CANH), the first question which required consideration was whether CANH qualified as 'medical treatment.' To answer this, the Court noted that the administration of CANH requires careful and experienced medical supervision. Since such skills are only available by drawing upon medical knowledge, and owing to its continuous periodic evaluation, emergency medical management and supervision, it was held to be 'medical treatment.' The second question was whether the withdrawal of CANH from Mr. Rana was in his best interests. It held that 'best interests' must be envisaged from the lens of the stakeholders, who are the next of kin and medical boards. It was rightly opined that a doctor's duty to perform treatment continues till it is capable of "conferring some therapeutic benefit." When recovery is impossible, the continuation of treatment merely prolongs biological existence de-hors any benefits. It led to the sole conclusion – withdrawal of treatment which was noted to be in Mr. Rana's best interests.

A definitive end

"For in that sleep of death what dreams may come, when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, must give us pause." Through his prose, the Bard cautioned that hesitation about death stems from the uncertainty of what comes after. However, what is definitive is that the ones who pass-on tend to live through us. Harish Rana will soon die. Yet, his contributions will forever be etched in history and in our constitutional jurisprudence.

And so, the advancement of constitutional morality is not only circumscribed to legislative actions which reach the country at large. It is also through addressing uncomfortable issues that advance the cause for humanity, even if they concern just an indiscernible minority.

Credit wars escalate as polls approach

Two parallel road inaugurations lay bare Kerala's friction with the Centre

STATE OF PLAY

Tiki Rajwi
tiki.rajwi@thehindu.co.in

A 'boycott row' by Kerala's Left Democratic Front (LDF) government overshadowed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the poll-bound southern State this month. For the political pundit and the general observer alike, it marked the latest episode among the long-running confrontations between Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Union government over Centre-State relations and fiscal federalism.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) and the LDF sought to depict the exclusion of Kerala Public Works Minister Mohammed Riyas from the inauguration ceremony of two National Highways (NH) reaches as yet another attempt by the BJP to monopolise the spotlight and claim credit for development projects in the run-up to the Assembly elections. The Prime Minister was in Kochi on March 11 to inaugurate a clutch of high-profile projects, which included the two stretches of NH-66, the main north-south artery.

Miffed over the fact that Mr. Riyas was not invited, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the Ministers for Local Self Government and Electricity, M.B. Rajesh and K. Krishnankutty respectively, also gave the event a miss. In battle-mode, the CPI(M) organised a parallel inauguration of the two highway stretches – Thalappady-Chengala and Vengalam-Ramanattukara – with Mr. Riyas taking centre-stage. A furious Mr. Riyas pointed out that while he, the State's Public Works Minister, was kept out, the Union government had thought it fit to extend an invitation to Rajeev Chandrasekhar, the State president of the BJP.

Mr. Riyas and the CPI(M) stated that had it not been for the LDF government, NH development in Kerala would have been a distant dream.

Price for a road

At the core of the State government's grievance lies the fact that Kerala, in an unprecedented step, had decided to bear 25% of the land acquisition cost for the widening of the NH. According to the LDF government, the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) had withdrawn from the project in 2014, citing a delay in the acquisition of the necessary land. The project was revived after the first LDF government led by Mr. Vijayan, which came to power in 2016, agreed to bear 25% of the land acquisition cost. Kerala had paid ₹5,580.74 crore, making it the first State to do so. Kerala had sourced the amount through the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB), a special purpose vehicle that mobilises resources for large infrastructure projects. Mr. Riyas also recalled instances where the Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari had praised Mr. Vijayan's government for having sped up the acquisition of land. Interestingly, Mr. Gadkari was also absent from the event.

Road development has been a perennially contentious issue in Kerala given its large population, geographical peculiarities and high demand for land. To be fair, the higher compensation payouts enabled by the Centre's Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, has also had a hand in the revival of NH development in Kerala.

The debt problem

Beyond the political sabre-rattling, the latest row spun the spotlight back on a related issue: Kerala's objections against the restrictions imposed by the Union government on its borrowing ability, citing off-budget borrowings by the KIIFB and the Kerala Social Security Pension Ltd.

The State has repeatedly urged the Centre to expand its borrowing space by a sum equivalent to its NH spending. It was not that long ago when NH development was caught in the midst of a Centre-State blame-game in Kerala after parts of the newly-constructed highway collapsed, raising questions about quality. Also, this is not the first time where 'credit' for large undertakings or schemes has become a bone of contention. For instance, the Centre's insistence that houses constructed under Kerala's LIFE Mission housing project must display the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana logo had drawn sharp responses from Mr. Vijayan's government. It is to be expected that 'credit wars' would again take centre-stage with Kerala moving into election mode. But while governments come and go, all that matters, ultimately, is whether taxpayers' money is being spent wisely.

Trump's tenure sees highest external attacks in a decade

Contrary to President Donald Trump's promises, U.S. interventions resulted in at least a thousand fatalities in 2025

DATA POINT

Nitika Francis
Sambavi Parthasarathy

When U.S. President Donald Trump came into power for the second time in January last year, he claimed that his proudest legacy would be that of a "peacemaker and unifier". In the initial months after his inauguration, Mr. Trump also openly lobbied for winning the Nobel Peace Prize. Yet, contrary to his words, the legacy of Mr. Trump during his second tenure has seen an explosion in hostile actions, euphemistically termed 'coercive diplomacy', the 'Donroe Doctrine' etc. besides military operations that have exacerbated conflicts across the world.

Increase in attacks

In fact, data maintained by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) show that Mr. Trump's second tenure has seen the highest number of external interventions by the U.S. forces and resultant casualties in the last 15 years. An analysis of external interventions by the U.S. shows that the first year of Mr. Trump's second term saw at least 663 military intervention events (air strikes, attacks, disruptions by weapons use) in other sovereign nations. In 2025 alone, the U.S.'s external attacks surged by almost 50% compared to 2024.

This is even higher than the number of such interventions recorded during his first presidential term between 2017 and 2021. While the final year of the Joe Biden administration also saw a high number of such interventions with 453 events, the numbers surged further under Mr. Trump, in stark contrast to his promises of ending foreign wars **(Chart 1)**.

Data show that between 2011 and 2014, the highest share of U.S. involvement was seen in South Asia, specifically in Pakistan. However, in the last five years, the U.S.'s involvement increased dramatically in West Asia and eastern Africa, specifically in Yemen and Somalia **(Chart 2)**. Yemen accounted for almost 60% of the U.S.'s external attacks in the last 10 years, resulting in more than 1,400 fatalities. While the U.S. began its attacks on Yemen in 2002, following the 9/11 attacks, the interventions increased after the collapse of the Yemeni government in early 2015.

In 2025, President Donald Trump initiated significant military strikes on the Houthis, marking the largest U.S. operation in the region since he took office. The U.S. vowed to continue these attacks as long as the Houthis conducted attacks on shipping lanes in the Red Sea.

The situation was more dire in Somalia, which accounted for close to 30% of the U.S.'s external attacks. Since 2015, the U.S.'s engagements have resulted in more than 4,000 fatalities.

In 2020, at the time of his first administration, Mr. Trump had ordered the Pentagon to withdraw most U.S. troops from Somalia, where they were deployed in an extended fight against the al-Shabab, an al-Qaeda affiliate. Mr. Biden, who took office after Mr. Trump, reversed this order in 2022. However, the current administration under Mr. Trump has not shown any indication of reverting to the earlier Trump order. The U.S. forces have engaged in more than 150 attacks in Somalia since 2025, almost half the total number of attacks carried out during Mr. Trump's entire first term.

In his inaugural speech last year, Mr Trump said, "We will measure our success not only by the battles we win but also by the wars that we end and perhaps most importantly, the wars we never get into."

Bloody regime

Mr. Trump has only contradicted himself by getting the U.S. involved in Israel's wars on Iran. Even Mr. Trump is unsure of how these hostilities will end.

An analysis by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies pointed out that though the recent U.S. military presence in West Asia is at its highest level since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, it is inadequate in the size and capabilities required for major combat or regime change. Last August, claiming credit for settling the India-Pakistan tensions, Mr. Trump said, "I love saving lives...And you know, when you save lives, you really end up having a peaceful world."

Data contradict this too. Mr. Trump's first year of his second term has left the country with more blood on its hands than any other President's term in the past 15 years.

Last year was the most severe in terms of fatalities, with at least a thousand people being killed by U.S.-led forces **(Chart 3)**. This is significantly higher than the death toll due to interventions in each of the preceding four years. The U.S.'s joint attacks with Israel too have come at a severe human cost with reports stating thousands of casualties.

Domestic sensibilities

Mr. Trump's idea of peace is unpopular even among Americans. A *Reuters* poll found that more than 40% of Americans disapproved of Mr. Trump's attack on Iran.

A similar sentiment was observed earlier this year when American forces invaded Venezuela, the most dramatic U.S. intervention in Latin America since the 1989 Panama invasion, in which close to 200 American troops entered Caracas.

Earlier this year, Mr. Trump stated in an interview with *The New York Times* that his morality was the only limit to his power, and only his mind could stop him from exerting it. With data contradicting his many statements, this might be the one that still rings true.

War and turmoil

The data for the charts were sourced from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. Data for 2026 is as of March 8, 2026

CHART 1: Year-wise number of attacks engaged by the U.S. beyond its borders

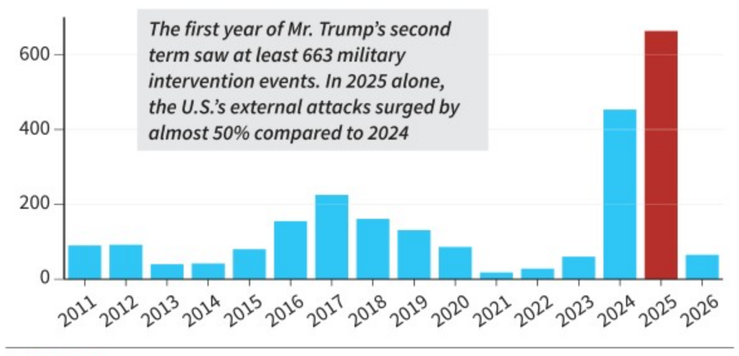


CHART 2: The region-wise number of attacks engaged by the U.S. In the last five years, the U.S.'s involvement increased in West Asia and eastern Africa

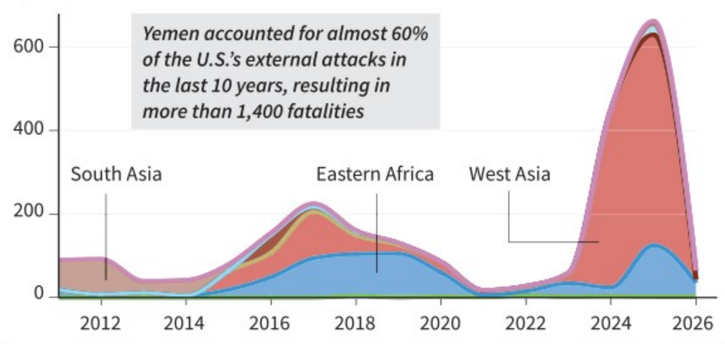
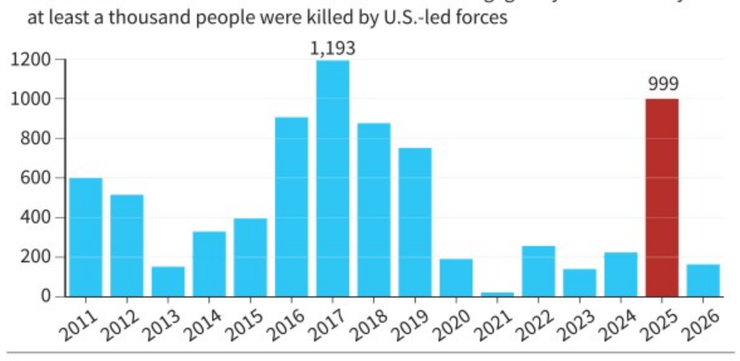


CHART 3: Year-wise number of fatalities in attacks engaged by the U.S. Last year at least a thousand people were killed by U.S.-led forces



FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 16, 1976

Vijay Amritraj claims two titles: Smith beaten in final

Memphis, Tennessee, March 15: India's Vijay Amritraj dominated the championship match of the World Championship Tennis $60,000 Memphis Club classic yesterday defeating Stan Smith of the United States 6-2,0-6,6-0.

The 22-year-old right hander picked up $17,000.

Amritraj broke Smith's service in the second, sixth and eighth games of the first set and claimed it at 6-2.

Smith double faulted on his first two points of the second game and had repeated trouble with his serve.

"I thought the key to the match was Stan's inability to serve," said Amritraj who was unseeded in a field that also included B. Borg B. Lutz, J.D. Newcome, A.J. Roche, and R. Tanner. "He was awful to serve, while I seemed to be returning his serves better than I usually do."

Amritraj swept through the first set with a baseline game which provided winners. He was true on his backhand in crucial situations. "My backhand was good to-day," he said.

Amritraj seemed to lose concentration in the second set as the 29-year-old Smith broke service in the first, third and fifth game on the way to set victory.

In the final set, Amritraj however returned to form and swept through the set in no time.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 16, 1926

The imperial library

Calcutta, March 15: Under the presidency of Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad Sastri, a public meeting was held in Albert Hall yesterday, to protest against the proposal of the Government of India for removing the Imperial Library from Calcutta to Delhi. Messages of sympathy with the objects of the meeting, were read from the National Council of Education, the British Indian Association, the Calcutta University, the University Law College and most of the other educational institutions in Calcutta and the mofussil. A Committee was formed to take the necessary steps for retention of the library in Calcutta.

The President pointed out that the library was a transferred subject and that, under the Library Act, the Government could not remove the Imperial Library from Calcutta.

From Page One

State polls from April 9; Bengal to have 2 phases

Ponda in Goa; Bagalkot and Davanagere South in Karnataka; Koridang in Nagaland; and Dharmanagar in Tripura will vote in byelections on April 9. Umreth in Gujarat, and Rahuri and Baramati in Maharashtra will vote on April 23.

The Tamil Nadu Assembly, which has 234 seats, completes its term on May 10, while that of Kerala, which has 140 seats, on May 23. Assam has 126 constituencies, and the term of its Assembly ends on May 20, while the 294-seat West Bengal Assembly completes its term on May 7. The term of the 30-seat Puducherry Assembly ends on June 15.

Asserting that "pure electoral rolls" are the "bedrock of democracy", Mr. Kumar told the media that the process of special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls was one of the 30 new measures undertaken by the poll panel over the last 12 months to ensure free and fair polls.

The exercise, which began in Bihar last year, has since been held across 13 States and Union Territories. It has been particularly contentious in West Bengal, where the Supreme Court has directed that the over 60 lakh cases listed under "adjudication" be decided by court-appointed judicial officers.

Responding to a question on whether these cases would be disposed of before the scheduled election dates, Mr. Kumar said: "As far as the supplementary list under adjudication is concerned, learned judges are looking into case by case, and those approved by them shall be included in the final electoral rolls by way of a supplementary list, in accordance with the order of the Supreme Court."

On a question regarding certain schemes announced by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee barely hours before the election dates were declared, the CEC said the "Model Code of Conduct" is applicable from now onwards. Actions taken prior to the MCC is a prerogative of the concerned governments".

Explaining why Bengal will vote in two phases instead of eight phases as in the previous Assembly polls, he said that the EC held detailed deliberations and in "its considered opinion, it was found necessary to reduce the number of phases and bring it down to an extent where it is convenient for everybody".

The CEC declined to comment on an Opposition-sponsored motion seeking his removal, submitted in Parliament, saying he did not wish to engage with political statements made by certain political leaders and parties against the EC.

He asserted that elections in all four States and Puducherry shall be conducted in a violence-free and inducement-free manner, and the poll panel would take strict action in case of violations.

About police officers accused of involvement in poll-related violence in the past elections in West Bengal, he said a list has been sought, and necessary action would be taken in accordance with the law.

LPG bookings fall, hint at let-up in panic-buying

"Citizens are advised not to resort to panic buying as adequate stocks of petrol and diesel are available across the country," the Centre's update on Sunday said.

Several States and Union Territories, including Bihar, Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan, have issued orders for allocation of non-domestic LPG in line with government guidelines. The State governments are undertaking enforcement measures to prevent hoarding and black marketing of petrol, diesel and LPG.

Raids are being carried out in several States, including Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, to check hoarding and black marketing of LPG cylinders.

Officials of PSU oil marketing companies are conducting surprise inspections at LPG distributors to ensure smooth supply and prevent irregularities.

Priority sectors continue to receive protected natural gas supplies, including 100% supply for piped natural gas (PNG or natural gas piped to household for cooking purpose) and Compressed Natural Gas, while supplies to industrial and Commercial users have been regulated at about 80%.

Commercial LPG cylinders have been placed at the disposal of State governments for priority distribution and are now available in 30 States and Union Territories, while authorities have stepped up raids and inspections to curb hoarding and black-marketing, it said.

The government has amended the LPG Control Order to mandate that consumers with PNG connections surrender domestic LPG connections, while domestic LPG production from refineries has been maximised and booking intervals rationalised to ensure equitable distribution, it said.

Domestic LPG production from refineries has been maximised, and several supply and demand-side measures have been implemented.

PSU oil marketing companies are promoting digital bookings, discouraging panic bookings and keeping LPG distributorships open on Sundays to facilitate smooth supply.

"Citizens are advised not to panic as the government remains committed to maintaining adequate LPG availability for households and essential sectors," it said. "Consumers are requested to avoid panic bookings, use digital booking platforms and avoid unnecessary visits to LPG distributors." Citizens are encouraged to opt for alternate fuels such as PNG wherever possible.

The government also said it is closely monitoring the situation in West Asia while ensuring stable fuel supplies and maritime safety.

RSS backs govt. response to conflict in West Asia

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has backed the Centre's handling of the West Asia conflict saying New Delhi has acted in the "supreme interest of the nation".

The response comes amid criticism from the Opposition, particularly the Congress, which has questioned the Centre's response to developments in West Asia that have sent oil prices soaring, sparking fears of fuel shortage in the country.

"Sangh has no role to play in what all is happening. We only want that there should be peace in the world... I will not analyse the reasons of wars because RSS has no say in the international diplomacy," RSS general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale said on Sunday.

" ... The Government of India is doing all that is best possible for the supreme interest of the nation," he added.

Answering a question on the RSS's view on those who mourned the death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the RSS general secretary said that expressing grief is "not wrong".

Cong. cautions govt. on 'strategic setback' over Chabahar Port

Jairam Ramesh recounts India's engagement with the port in Iran since late 1990s, questions lack of allocation for the project in Union Budget

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Questioning the Centre's stance on the Chabahar Port project in Iran, Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh on Sunday said that "continuity in governance" was an "essential reality" that the Narendra Modi government refused to acknowledge, and termed the apparent disengagement from the project a strategic setback to India's outreach in Central Asia.

Mr. Ramesh's remarks come amid the absence of any allocation for the Chabahar Port in the 2026-27 Union Budget.

In a post on X, he asked, "Does this mean that India has exited, or that its investment commitments for the time being have been fulfilled?"

The Ministry of External Affairs has recently informed Parliament that India has already fulfilled its commitment of contributing $120 million for procuring port equipment and that no additional funding is currently due.

> Chabahar, which is about 170 km west of Pakistan's Gwadar port built by China, is now not on the horizon. This is a second strategic setback to India's Central Asian diplomacy, coming as it does after India's closure of its Air Force base in Ayni near Dushanbe in Tajikistan
>
> **JAIRAM RAMESH**
> Congress leader

"Chabahar, which is about 170 km west of Pakistan's Gwadar port built by China, is now not on the horizon. This is a second strategic setback to India's Central Asian diplomacy, coming as it does after India's closure of its Air Force base in Ayni near Dushanbe in Tajikistan," Mr. Ramesh said.

Recalling India's engagement with the project, he said New Delhi began exploring investments in Chabahar in the late 1990s as part of a broader India-Afghanistan-Iran cooperation strategy.

According to Mr. Ramesh, the Union Cabinet approved an initial investment of $115 million for the project in May 2013. He said this decision was taken even as India was implementing the India-U.S. civil nuclear agreement signed in 2008—an example, he said, of a balanced and strategic foreign policy approach. He also alleged that after coming to power in 2014, the Modi government "repackaged" the Chabahar initiative and projected it as part of the Prime Minister's own vision without adequately acknowledging the UPA government's role.

Confer Bharat Ratna on Kanshi Ram, says Rahul in letter to PM

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Rahul Gandhi

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and senior Congress leader, Rahul Gandhi, has urged the government to confer the Bharat Ratna on Kanshi Ram, a Dalit icon and founder of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), describing him as a "symbol of empowerment and hope".

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Kanshi Ram's birth anniversary on Sunday, Mr. Gandhi credited him with strengthening the foundations of Indian democracy.

The Congress's newfound focus on Kanshi Ram, who died in 2006, has irked BSP supremo Mayawati, who cautioned her voters and cadres to be alert to what she described as attempts to appropriate Kanshi Ram's legacy.

Mr. Gandhi said Kanshi Ram transformed the nature of Indian politics. "Through his movements, he raised political awareness among Bahujans and the poor. He reminded them that their vote, voice, and representation are important, and that this country belongs to everyone equally," he said in the letter. Kanshi Ram's efforts, he added, paved the way for many who had never considered entering public life, to see politics as a means to achieve justice and equality.

"Conferring the Bharat Ratna on him posthumously would recognise his immense contribution to our nation. It would honour the aspirations of millions who continue to view him as a symbol of empowerment and hope," he added.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said Kanshi Ram's contribution to the struggle for social justice and equality would remain an inspiration.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra described Kanshi Ram as a social justice hero and a fierce voice for deprived and exploited communities.

Three years on, justice eludes 2 Kuki-Zo women who were disrobed, paraded and gang-raped in Manipur

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Nearly three years after two Kuki-Zo women were disrobed, paraded, and gang-raped by a mob in Manipur's Thoubal district – an attack in which the brother and father of one of the survivors were killed – three accused in the case remain absconding, two are out on bail, and the bail application of another will come up for hearing in the Supreme Court later this month.

The husband of one of the victims, an ex-Army jawan and key witness in the case, told *The Hindu* that a prime suspect identified as Loya, accused of killing the two men, continues to roam free. He alleged that no serious efforts are being made to arrest him. The case is being investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on the directions of the Supreme Court. The Manipur Police had arrested seven people, including a juvenile, in July 2023.

Pointing to the slow pace of the trial, the witness said, "We attend the hearings through video-conferencing (trial being held in Guwahati). Justice remains elusive. Two accused are already on bail. The main accused, Loya, who killed the two men, was known to us. Despite the survivor's statements, he has not been arrested and continues to move around freely. People known to me in the area have told me."

The victims had fled their village in Kangpokpi district when ethnic violence between Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities erupted on May 3, 2023. According to investigators, a mob of around 1,000 people attacked their village the following day.

A chargesheet filed by the CBI alleges that Loya beat the brother and father of one of the victims to death using a big wooden log and also took part in the sexual assault. The other two accused – Chinglen and Inaoton – named by the survivors for their role in the assault and parading of the women, also remain absconding.

The incident came to national attention after a video clip of the assault went viral, triggering widespread outrage. FILE PHOTO

The incident, which occurred on May 4, 2023, came to national attention only on July 19 that year, after a video clip of the assault went viral, triggering widespread outrage and intervention by the Supreme Court. The case was eventually transferred to the CBI, which filed a chargesheet on October 12, 2023. The trial was shifted to Guwahati as the victims could not travel to the valley areas of Manipur for hearings.

On September 8, 2025, the Gauhati High Court granted bail to two accused – Nameirakpam Kiran Meitei and Arun Khundongbam. While acknowledging the grave allegations against the accused, the court held that continued incarceration without trial cannot be used as pre-trial punishment.

CBI chargesheet

The CBI chargesheet alleged that Khundogbam was part of the mob and played an active role in the sexual assault, gang rape, naked parading of women victims, and murder of two relatives of one victim.

Kiran Meitei is accused of participating in the crime and circulating the assault video. Both were identified by the victims during a test identification parade done virtually.

The chargesheet also stated that policemen present at the scene refused to help the women during the mob assault, allegedly saying the police vehicle had "no key" before leaving them at the mercy of the mob.

According to investigators, the victims escaped through forests over the next 48 hours before reaching safety. The FIR in the case was registered later, after the video surfaced. The CBI said the role of the police personnel is still under investigation. The agency has appealed against the bail granted to the two accused in the Supreme Court.

Another accused, Yumlembam Jiban Singh, has filed a Special Leave Petition (SLP) in the SC, challenging a Gauhati High Court order on December 16, 2025, which rejected his bail plea solely on grounds of the gravity of the alleged offences, despite acknowledging the prolonged incarceration. He is accused of recording and sharing the video of the assault and has sought parity with the two co-accused, who are already out on bail. The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear the matter on March 24.

Three other accused still behind bars are Huirem Herodash Meitei, Ningombam Tomba Singh and Pukhrihongbam Suranjoy Meitei.

A February 26 order of the Supreme Court detailed the status of investigations into Manipur violence cases being monitored by Special Investigation Teams (SIT) under former Maharashtra Police chief Dattatray Padsalgikar, who was appointed by the court on August 7, 2023, to oversee the probe.

The 12th status report submitted by Mr. Padsalgikar on February 18 noted that Manipur has constituted 36 SITs across eight districts to investigate riot-related cases, while 31 serious cases were handed over to the CBI.

Diversify agriculture and encourage farmers to grow pulses, SC tells govt.

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has asked the Union government to revisit its existing policy framework and explore a better substitute under which farmers are incentivised to diversify from conventional crops such as wheat and paddy to pulses.

Besides a relook into policy and diversification of crops, the court asked the Centre to convene a meeting of different stakeholders to look into various issues. These include the absence of an incentivised minimum support price (MSP), sufficient enough to cover the expenditure that small or medium level farmers incur in producing pulses; guaranteed timely sale of pulse products; and fixation of the cost price of yellow peas, which are currently being imported, so that it did not impact the homegrown pulses produced by farmers.

Supreme Court of India

A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said the Centre, through its Ministries of Agriculture, Commerce and Consumer Affairs, and with the aid of subject experts with ground knowledge, mould a framework which would make pulse cultivation worthwhile for farmers.

"There should be a campaign to diversify agriculture. Diversification of paddy is the biggest challenge in North India... Do we require such a quantity of paddy? We may need for export purposes, but land can also be diverted for pulses. Please ask your Ministries to constitute a committee of people ... somebody who has worked at the ground level, who knows the psyche and compelling circumstances that drive the farming community," Chief Justice Kant addressed Additional Solicitor-General N. Venkataraman, appearing for the Centre.

The court was hearing a petition filed by Kisan Mahapanchayat, an NGO, seeking curbs on the import of yellow peas.

NC seeks release of Kashmiri youth booked under UAPA

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

Scores of youth in Kashmir, who allegedly participated in rallies protesting against the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, have been detained and booked under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.

At a meeting with Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday, a delegation of legislators from the ruling National Conference demanded the withdrawal of such cases before Id.

"FIRs have been registered, including the invocation of provisions under the UAPA, a stringent law whose application against mourners sets a deeply concerning precedent," said the memorandum jointly filed by the NC legislators, including Tanvir Sadiq, Ali Mohammad Dar, Shameema Firdous, Reyaz Bedar and Hilal Akbar Lone.

"We demand a halt to any further arrests or punitive measures targeting individuals for their participation in these mourning gatherings," it said.

West Bengal political parties welcome two-phase election

The shorter schedule this year is in sharp contrast to the eight-phase Assembly election in 2021 and the six-phased polls in 2016 and 2011; in the first phase on April 23, 152 constituencies will vote, while the remaining 142 will do it on April 29

Shiv Sahay Singh
Shrabana Chatterjee
KOLKATA

Marking a departure from the earlier trend of multiple-phase elections, the Election Commission of India on Sunday announced that election to the West Bengal Assembly will be held in two phases.

In the first phase on April 23, 152 Assembly constituencies will go to the polls, and the remaining 142 constituencies will vote on April 29. This is in sharp contrast to the eight-phase Assembly election in 2021 amid the raging COVID-19 pandemic.

The Assembly elections in 2016 and in 2011 were held in six phases. The major political parties, including the Trinamool Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have welcomed the two-phase polls.

"How many phases will it take for the people of Bengal to decisively reject Bangla-Birodhi @BJP4India once and for all? Answer – Jotoi Koro Hamla, #AbarJitbeBangla [the party's slogan for the polls] #BoycottBJP," the Trinamool posted on social media after the announcement of Assembly elections.

Ballot season: Ahead of the upcoming West Bengal Assembly election, a vendor arranges flags of various political parties put up for sale at his shop in Kolkata on Sunday. ANI

Samik Bhattacharya, president of the West Bengal unit of the BJP, appreciated the poll body's decision. "The people of West Bengal are ready to bring down the current regime," he said.

He reiterated his party's promise of implementing the Seventh Pay Commission for government employees and ₹3,000 per month payout for women under Annapurna Lakshmir Bhandar Scheme.

'Doubtful voter list'

While the elections have been announced, the fate of 60 lakh electors still hangs in the balance. Though there was no word from Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who had recently observed a five-day sit-in in protest against putting electors under judicial adjudication, State secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) Mohammad Salim said his party will fight for the rights of these electors before courts.

"The Constitution guarantees rights to citizens of this country to contest elections. With over 60 lakh people still under the commission's doubtful voter list, they will lose the opportunity to submit candidature, even if they appear in the supplementary list published later. The nomination form mandates them to state their voter details in terms of their part and serial number in electoral rolls, which they cannot," Mr. Salim said.

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, while announcing the Assembly elections, said that a supplementary list of electors under adjudication will be published as per instructions of the Supreme Court.

The Congress in West Bengal also welcomed the two-phase polls. Senior Congress leader Pradip Bhattacharya welcomed the decision but expressed concern over whether voters would be able to exercise their right to vote without intimidation.

With the dates of elections being announced, the candidates of major political parties are likely to be announced in the next few days. Around 480 companies of Central forces have already been deployed in the State for confidence-building measures.

Bengal CM announces DA arrears, honorarium hike for religious leaders

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday made last-minute announcements for government employees as well as muezzins and purohits before the Election Commission declared the dates for the Assembly election in the State.

The Chief Minister announced the payment of dearness allowance (DA) arrears under the ROPA (Revision of Pay and Allowance) Rules, 2009, from March. This comes after an order by the Supreme Court in February, directing the payment of DA arrears to West Bengal government employees after more than a decade of legal tussle.

The government had approached the court seeking a review of the order. On March 13, several unions of State government employees observed a strike demanding the release of DA arrears.

"I am happy to announce that our *Ma-Mati-Manush* [mother, motherland, and people] government has delivered on its promise to all its employees and pensioners, and to lakhs of teachers and non-teaching staff of our educational institutions, as well as employees/ pensioners of our other grant-in-aid institutions like panchayats, municipal bodies, other local bodies etc. They will start receiving their ROPA 2009 DA arrears from March 2026 onwards as per the modalities detailed out in the Notifications issued by our Finance Department," Ms. Banerjee posted on social media.

Setting the tone: Mamata Banerjee's announcements came less than an hour before Election Commission declared poll dates. PTI

The announcement came less than an hour before the EC held a press conference to announce the dates for the Assembly election in West Bengal.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had said that once the Bharatiya Janata Party came to power, the party will implement the Seventh Pay Commission in West Bengal. Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari called the announcement by the Chief Minister on paying DA arrears a joke.

"What a JOKE! Mamata Banerjee suddenly remembers lakhs of employees, pensioners, teachers and non-teaching staff just MINUTES before the Election Commission announces poll dates?" Mr. Adhikari posted on social media.

Before the announcement on DA arrears, the Chief Minister also announced a hike in the honorarium of muezzins and purohits by ₹500 per month. Ms. Banerjee had announced an honorarium for imams and muezzins in 2012, which drew widespread criticism. Later, she extended the honorarium to Hindu priests as well.

Cong. takes jibe at EC; says MCC short for 'Modi's Code of Campaign'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the announcement of the Assembly election schedule by the Election Commission of India (EC), the Congress on Sunday took a swipe at the poll body, referring to the Model Code of Conduct, or MCC, as "Modi's Code of Campaigning", which, the party said, would be "full of defamation, abuses, intimidation, fear-mongering, and spreading the virus of lies".

Congress general secretary in charge of communications Jairam Ramesh took to the social media platform X.

'Virus of lies'

"The Election Commission will announce the schedule for the 2026 Assembly elections at 4 p.m. today. It would have been given the go-ahead by the G2, since G1 would have completed this round of inaugurations, ribbon-cuttings, flag-offs, and launches," Mr. Ramesh said.

The Congress frequently uses the terms "G1" and "G2" to take swipes at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, both of whom are from Gujarat.

"The Election Commission's Model Code of Conduct (MCC) will soon come into effect. But since 2014, this has come to stand for Modi's Code of Campaigning, which will be full of defamation, abuses, intimidation, fear-mongering, and spreading the virus of lies," he added.

The Model Code of Conduct is a set of conventions agreed upon by all stakeholders during the elections.

Its objective is to keep campaigning, polling and counting orderly, clean and peaceful, and check any abuse of state machinery and finances by the party in power.

Cong. turned Assam into 'land of infiltrators', only BJP can free the State from them: Shah

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The Congress has "legalised, formalised, and normalised" the infiltration of Bangladeshis in Assam and only the BJP can "make the State free of infiltrators", Union Home Minister Amit Shah said here on Sunday.

Addressing the Yuva Shakti Samaroh of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, Mr. Shah slammed the Congress for turning Assam into a "land of infiltrators" during its rule from 2001 to 2016. He reminded the people of the BJP's promise ahead of the 2021 polls to rid Assam of infiltrators.

"Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma freed 1.51 lakh *bighas* of government land encroached by these infiltrators. Elect us for the third time, and we will drive them out, not just from Assam but from the entire country," Mr. Shah said.

Poll pitch: Amit Shah attends the Yuva Shakti Samaroh organised by Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha in Guwahati. RITU RAJ KONWAR

He alleged that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi opposed the special intensive revision of electoral rolls as the names of infiltrators and ineligible voters were being deleted.

"This is just the beginning. We will not stop at deleting names. We will drive out each infiltrator," he said.

The Minister said there should be a drive against people staying illegally in the districts of Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Darrang, Dhubri, Goalpara, Morigaon, and Nagaon. All are Muslim-majority districts.

Mr. Shah said infiltrators were evicted from the Kaziranga National Park and the birthplace of 15th-6th century saint-reformer Srimanta Sankaradeva.

"Give us another mandate, and we will reclaim the remaining land currently under the illegal occupation of infiltrators," he added.

During the Congress rule, Assam was "known for violence", and several youth were killed, he said. "The Congress did nothing for the youth, its leaders were only concerned about the benefits of their families," he added.

Global touch and peace

The senior BJP leader slammed the Congress for failing to respect Assam's art and culture. He said the BJP had given a global touch to the State's popular folk dances and honoured music maestro Bhupen Hazarika by conferring the Bharat Ratna on him.

He said the BJP-led NDA at the Centre and in Assam ushered in peace by signing agreements with several armed groups over the past 10 years. Re-electing the BJP would make the hard-earned peace last longer, he added.

Earlier, Mr. Shah inaugurated several healthcare facilities in Assam, including the Pragjyotishpur Medical College and Hospital, the Golaghat Cancer Centre, and the Tinsukia Cancer Centre.

The Union Minister said he was confident that the BJP would return to power in the State with the "largest ever mandate".

Assam votes on April 9 in a single phase.

(With PTI inputs)

Take up notice on removal of CEC to dispel doubts: MP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The 10-page notice lists seven charges against CEC including obstruction of probe into electoral fraud

Two days after 193 Opposition MPs submitted notice in both Houses of Parliament seeking the removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, the Trinamool Congress's Rajya Sabha member Derek O'Brien said that if the notice was not taken up, it would raise doubts about a "tacit understanding" between the CEC and the Executive.

Mr. O'Brien maintained that the Opposition's notice was fully in order.

The Opposition's 10-page notice lists seven charges against Mr. Kumar, ranging from "partisan and discriminatory conduct in office" to "deliberate obstruction of investigation of electoral fraud" and "mass disenfranchisement". Opposition parties have repeatedly accused the CEC of aiding the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), particularly during the ongoing SIR process, which they allege is being used to benefit the ruling party.

Under the rules, the presiding officers of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha must jointly constitute a committee to investigate the complaint.

After completing its inquiry, the committee submits its report to the Speaker or the Chairman, who is required to place it before the respective Houses.

Pure electoral rolls are bedrock of any democracy, says CEC Gyanesh Kumar

Debayan Tewari
CHENNAI

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar on Sunday hailed the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls as a "massive democratic exercise", and said that "pure electoral rolls" were the "bedrock of any democracy".

The Election Commission announced the schedule for the Assembly election in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and the Union Territory of Puducherry on Sunday. Barring West Bengal, all others vote in one phase.

The CEC's statement comes amid an ongoing uproar in West Bengal, which is voting on April 23 and 29, over the SIR of electoral rolls, and the Opposition submitting notices in both Houses of Parliament seeking to move a motion to remove Mr. Kumar, alleging partisan attitude.

Gyanesh Kumar and Election Commissioner Vivek Joshi during the announcement of the elections on Sunday. R.V. MOORTHY

Mr. Kumar, however, did not respond to questions on the Opposition's notice.

"Pure electoral rolls are the bedrock of any democracy. With this objective the special intensive revision (SIR) is being conducted as per Article 326 of the Constitution to ensure that no eligible elector is left out while no ineligible person is included in the electoral roll," Mr. Kumar said.

The CEC thanked officials who were involved in the SIR process.

"I congratulate all the booth-level officers, assistant electoral registration officers, electoral registration officers, district election officers and all election officials who were involved in this work for ensuring its smooth conduct and completion," he said.

Mr. Kumar said the elections reflected the country's "diversity". "As all of you are aware, these five States and Union Territories represent distinct geographical and cultural landscapes of India. These elections represent not only a democratic exercise but also the cultural richness of India, and truly reflect the unity in diversity of our nation," he said.

He said the elections must be free of violence or inducement, and warned that the commission would take strong action against any violation.

Modi lauds Speaker Om Birla's 'impartial' leadership after no-confidence motion fails

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday commended Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla for conducting the House proceedings with "dedication, patience, and impartiality", saying that his actions would strengthen the country's parliamentary democracy.

In a letter to Mr. Birla, Mr. Modi congratulated the members of the House for rejecting "political misconduct" by defeating the Opposition's no-confidence motion brought against the Speaker in the Lok Sabha.

"After the no-confidence motion was defeated, I listened carefully to the statement you delivered in the House. The way you referred to parliamentary history, the responsibilities of the Chair, and the supremacy of the rules, with balance, patience, and clarity, is very impressive. I congratulate you for this," he said.

Om Birla

Mr. Modi said the Lok Sabha Speaker's responsibility was not only to conduct the proceedings, but also to protect democratic traditions, rules, and institutional dignity.

The Prime Minister said differences of opinion were natural in a democracy, but added that it was a matter of concern when political disagreement turns into disrespect for parliamentary dignity. "In such moments, the person occupying the Chair is tested. The gentleness, balance, and impartiality with which you faced these situations is commendable," he said.

Mr. Birla shared the letter on X, saying that Mr. Modi's message would inspire all elected representatives in Parliament, State legislatures, and local bodies, transcending party boundaries.

INBRIEF

Bangladeshi man who 'helped Hadi's killers escape' arrested

The Special Task Force of the West Bengal Police on Saturday arrested a Bangladeshi national from Nadia district for allegedly helping the suspected killers of Bangladesh leader Sharif Osman Hadi (in photo) flee to India. The arrest comes a week after the STF arrested two Bangladeshi nationals suspected to be involved in the killing of Hadi. "During interrogation, Philip Sangma admitted that he operates as a tout and facilitates illegal migrants to cross the border through Haluaghat (Bangladesh) - Dalupara (Meghalaya) border area in lieu of money. He also admitted that he had facilitated the two accused in the Hadi murder case to enter India," the STF said in a statement.

DNT leaders move SC seeking separate count during Census

Members of Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Tribe (DNT) communities have approached the Supreme Court, seeking directions that their communities be enumerated distinctly in the 2027 Census with a specific question for this in the forms. The petitioners have said that they have never been counted in any of the Censuses, arguing that the absence of this data has led to community members being unable to avail government benefits. They sought specific directions from the court to the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India to include a specific question on the DNTs in both phases of the 2027 Census.

Pakistani terrorist killed near LoC in Baramulla, says Army

An unidentified terrorist was killed close to the Line of Control (LoC) in north Kashmir's Baramulla district on Sunday. The Army said they launched a joint operation in Buchhar, Uri Sector on the night of March 14-15 following a specific infiltration warning from J&K Police. "The alert troops spotted suspicious movement of a terrorist in the thicket. The ambush was readjusted and the terrorist was challenged resulting in the terrorist opening indiscriminate fire. In the contact, a Pakistan terrorist was eliminated. Warlike stores including an AK rifle, pistols and large quantities of ammunition have been recovered," the Army said.

CBI arrests 'recruiter' tied to overseas cyberscam centres

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested a person on the charge of recruiting Indian nationals for cyberscam compounds located in foreign jurisdictions, including Cambodia. The accused has been identified as Krishna Kumar Lakhwani from Uttar Pradesh. He allegedly collected about $300-$400 per head from job seekers and facilitated their travel to Cambodia via Delhi through different routes, where they were forced to carry out various online frauds targeting victims in India. Based on source information and surveillance, the CBI intercepted the accused upon his arrival in India and brought him to the office for questioning.

Veena exponent Jayanthi Kumaresh to receive Sangita Kalanidhi award at Music Academy's 100th Conference

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The 100th Conference and Concerts of the The Music Academy, Chennai, beginning in December this year, will be marked by the conferment of the Sangita Kalanidhi award on renowned veena player Jayanthi Kumaresh. Bharatanatyam dancer Narendra G. will receive the Nritya Kalanidhi award.

"The executive committee, at its meeting on March 15, decided to confer the award on her and other awards on various musicians," said N. Murali, President of the academy, on Sunday.

Ms. Kumaresh, a member of the musically rich Lalgudi G. Jayaraman family, learnt from her mother, Rajalakshmi. She later trained under her aunt Padmavathi Ananthagopalan and then maestro S. Balachander. She also received guidance from her uncle Lalgudi G. Jayaraman, Sangita Kalanidhi T.K. Brinda, composer Thanjavur Sankara Iyer, and T.R. Subramanian.

Jayanthi Kumaresh, an exponent of the Saraswati veena, performs in Chennai; and Bharatanatyam dancer Narendra G., who will receive the Nritya Kalanidhi award. B. VELANKANNI RAJ, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A postgraduate in English, Ms. Kumaresh is one of the foremost exponents of the Saraswati veena and has collaborated with the late tabla maestro Zakir Hussain. She has contributed in large measure to the present increase in the popularity of the instrument.

"It is a great honour that I have been selected for the award in the 100th Conference and Concerts of the Academy, whose logo features Saraswati with a veena. It is an honour not just for me, but for the veena, the national instrument," Ms. Jayanthi told *The Hindu*.

She said a veena artiste had been selected for the award after a gap of 34 years, and it was a matter of pride that it had happened in the centenary year of her guru, the late S. Balachander.

The Sangita Kala Acharya awards will go to vocalist Sugandha Kalamegam and mridangam player Thrissur C. Narendran. The recipients of the TTK Awards are nagaswaram player Injikudi Subramaniam and violinist T.K.V.B. Ramanujacharyulu.

The Musicologist Award will go to D. Balasubrahmaniyan, Adjunct Professor of Music and Co-chair of Global South Asian Studies at Wesleyan University. Bharatanatyam dancer A. Janardhanan will receive the Nritya Kala Acharya award, a newly instituted award this year. S. Rajeswari will receive the Dance Musician Award (vocal), and T.K. Padmanabhan the Dance Musician Award (instrumental), the other two new dance awards.

Mr. Murali said the Sangita Kalanidhi-designate would preside over the academic sessions of the Annual Conference and Concerts of the Academy to be held between December 15, 2026 and January 1, 2027. She will receive the award along with the other awardees on January 1, the day of Sadas.

Mr. Narendra will receive the Nritya Kalanidhi award at the inauguration of the 20th Annual Dance Festival of the Academy on January 3, 2027.

India-EU ties in focus as Jaishankar visits Brussels

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Sunday kickstarted a two-day visit to Brussels for talks with his counterparts from member states of European Union.

It is the first high-level visit from India to Brussels-headquartered EU after the two sides firmed up a landmark Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in January.

The External Affairs Ministry said Mr. Jaishankar is travelling to the capital of Belgium at the invitation of EU High Representative and Vice-President Kaja Kallas to interact with Foreign Ministers of the 27 member states of the bloc at its Foreign Affairs Council Meeting.

"During the visit, the External Affairs Minister will also hold meetings with the leadership of the European Union, and his counterparts from Belgium and other EU member states," the Ministry said. "The visit of the External Affairs Minister coming soon after the historic 16th India-EU summit is expected to further deepen India's strategic partnership with the European Union," it said.

As the visit is taking place amid the Iran-U.S. conflict, the two sides might deliberate on the flow of energy.

UPSC's new rule: SC nod must for delay in choosing State DGPs

Attorney-General says that there is no provision for UPSC to condone such inordinate delay and proceed as if no irregularity had occurred

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has revised the rules for the empanelment of State Director-General of Police and Head of Police Force.

The State governments will now have to get the consent of the Supreme Court for any delay in submitting the list of DGP-rank officers to the UPSC for empanelment.

While disposing of an interlocutory application moved by the Union Home Ministry, the Supreme Court had ruled that States should send their proposals in anticipation of the vacancies to the UPSC well in time – at least three months prior to the date of retirement of the incumbent on the post of DGP.

It also ordered that "none of the States shall ever conceive of the idea of appointing any person on the post of Director-General of Police on acting basis for there is no concept of acting Director-General of Police as per the decision in Prakash Singh's case".

With many States delaying the process of sending proposals for shortlisting the names of three DGPs to the top post for various reasons and some appointing Acting DGPs, the UPSC sought legal opinion in the matter.

The UPSC has revised the rules for the empanelment of State Director-General of Police and Head of Police Force. GETTY IMAGES

The UPSC said "it is observed that many States have been submitting the proposals for convening the Empanelment Committee Meeting in violation of the Supreme Court directions".

Attorney-General R. Venkataramani opined that the delay by the State government in forwarding names for empanelment was "excessive".

"On examining the applicable rules and precedents, I find no provision empowering the UPSC to condone such inordinate delay and then proceed as though no irregularity had occurred, ultimately recommending a panel of DGP," he said.

The State government should have first come to Supreme Court in case of any difficulty. The more appropriate course, therefore, would be to require the State to seek leave or clarification from the Supreme Court, he noted.

Amending its earlier orders, the UPSC said the States shall seek leave or clarification from the Supreme Court for delayed submission except death, resignation or premature relieving of DGP in accordance with the top court judgment.

Question in U.P. police recruitment exam sparks row

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath directed immediate blacklisting of the paper setters

The use of the word "pandit" allegedly in bad light in a question in a police recruitment examination in Uttar Pradesh triggered an uproar on Sunday, with political parties and Brahmin social groups questioning the motive of the government and the recruitment body. The word 'pandit', which means scholar, is also used to refer to Brahmins.

A question in the written test for sub-inspector (civil police) and equivalent posts, conducted by the Uttar Pradesh Police Recruitment and Promotion Board on March 14, reportedly asked candidates to choose a term for "a person who changes according to circumstances". The options were Pandit (scholar), *Avsarvadi* (opportunist), *Nishkapat* (innocent or sincere), and *Sadachari* (virtuous). The option Pandit stoked a row with political parties alleging that it was aimed at presenting the Brahmin community in a derogatory way.

"Such a question shows the mindset of the present government. The word 'Pandit' generally refers to Brahmins. Any derogatory words directed at any caste, community, religion or tradition should not be allowed anywhere in a civilised society. I strongly condemn such a question which was asked in the sub-inspector (SI) examination," said Pramod Tiwari, Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha.

Mahesh Pandey, who is associated with the Sarv Brahmin Ekta Sabha, alleged, "Such acts are not accidental; they appear to be part of a deliberate conspiracy to provoke divisions and disturb peace."

Amid the uproar, Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak said, "We strongly object to the [answer] options provided for a question in the Uttar Pradesh Police Recruitment Examination. The government has taken serious note of this." Growing criticism forced Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to issue directions to all recruitment board chairpersons to ensure that no derogatory remarks are made about the dignity and beliefs of any individual, caste, sect or religious community and directed the blacklisting of the errant paper setters.

The ruling BJP said that those indulging in such divisive tactics will be dealt with firmly under the law.

TH CROSSWORD + 14742

(set by Saral)

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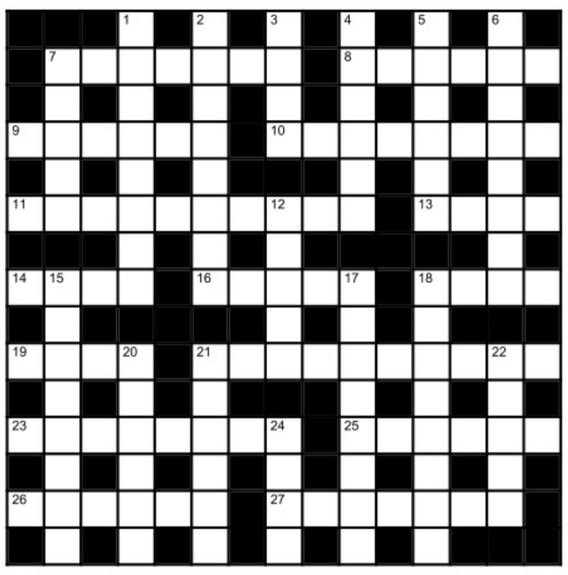
SCAN TO PLAY



Across

7 Crowded square got hotter (7)
8 Entry of a tax including charges primarily (6)
9 Girl disheartened by long problem (6)
10 Playing shloka, initially bhajan at house (3,5)
11 Gangster controlling English reporters (international) in valley (10)
13 Repaired sherwani, every now and then (4)
14 Nearly squeeze large plant (4)
16 Almost escape running in gap (5)
18 Team leaders from several industrial departments enter (4)
19 Shortly examine stable (4)
21 Native sailor fixing an oil rig (10)
23 Fellow least bothered about one Victor in party (8)
25 Creating new image for riddle (6)
26 Leave power grabbing society (6)
27 Golden brown durians at first in fruit garden (7)

Down

1 Finished a type of exam relating to rural life (8)
2 Stress from mishaps sadly after drug (8)
3 Heroine is dancing only lambada from the beginning (4)
4 Knocked over container, spilling ink? Getting towel (6)
5 Drops fights (6)
6 Avoided shredded cheese with salad in the end (8)
7 Perhaps loves to answer (5)
12 Harry hid a ring in this place (5)
15 Banks essentially tried badly to catch that man owing money (2,3,3)
17 Height of wall not fine outside pit (8)
18 Mark covering object below one master's weapon (8)
20 Check and tie roughly (6)
21 Arrival of a director before opening (6)
22 Targeted media by mistake (5)
24 John finally left stolen goods (4)

SUDOKU

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9								4
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			3				6	
	8	1			4	9		2
	4	5			2			

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

No.SS6821 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

Solution to previous puzzle

		P	A	L	I	N	D	R	O	M	I	S	T	
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S	H	R	E	W		W	O	R	S	T	C	A	S	E
Y		E		S		S		E		I		P		V
C	O	N	Q	U	E	R		S	E	N	E	S	C	E
H		N		I		O		T		E				R
I	D	I	O	T	B	O	X		R	E	H	A	B	
C		A				M		F				R		S
	A	L	L	O	Y		H	E	A	D	A	C	H	E
S				R		O		N		E		H		V
T	E	A	R	G	A	S		G	U	N	F	I	R	E
O		B		A		S		S		M		T		N
C	L	O	W	N	F	I	S	H		A	L	E	R	T
K		R		I		F		U		R		C		Y
	S	T	I	C	K	Y	W	I	C	K	E	T		

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

5	4	3	1	9	8	6	7	2
1	6	7	5	2	4	3	9	8
9	2	8	6	3	7	5	1	4
8	7	6	2	1	3	4	5	9
3	9	1	8	4	5	2	6	7
4	5	2	9	7	6	1	8	3
2	8	5	3	6	9	7	4	1
7	3	9	4	5	1	8	2	6
6	1	4	7	8	2	9	3	5

FAITH

Actions to refrain from

In one of his discourses, Dr. Venkatesh explained that Vidura narrated to Dhritarashtra that certain actions undertaken by human beings may not yield desired results and may ultimately prove futile.

Teaching unworthy or undeserving disciples will never bear fruit. It becomes a sheer waste of time and energy for both the teacher and the student. A true teacher should discern a disciple's capacity and receptiveness before imparting knowledge. If a teacher boasts about having taught an incapable student, such self-praise does not deserve admiration.

Likewise, a person should avoid unnecessary interaction with those who harbour dislike or hatred toward him, for such association will only lead to unpleasantness and discord. In the same way, if a man rescues a woman from danger, he should not glorify himself as a hero. Performing a noble act and then boasting about it diminishes its true value.

It is futile to seek or expect financial assistance from a miser, for such a person is unwilling to part with his wealth even for a worthy cause. Likewise, a person who praises himself and expects others to bestow name and fame upon him does not engage in a commendable or respectable act.

A person who involves himself in unwanted and undesirable activities out of arrogance or recklessness deserves condemnation. It is also useless to discuss a matter with someone who has neither trust nor interest in it. Similarly, making efforts to obtain something that is impossible to acquire is nothing but a futile exercise.

Choosing the right personal loan lender

With rising frauds, choosing a dependable lender is important. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Santosh Agarwal

One of the first steps while applying for a personal loan involves reviewing your eligibility and shortlisting lenders whose requirements align with your needs and profile. Choosing the right lender can have a significant impact on both the overall borrowing cost and the borrowing experience. Careful evaluation of key metrics is required to choose the most suitable lender for you.

After shortlisting the potential lenders, borrowers should further narrow down available offers to find the best fit. Differences in minimum income thresholds, employment stability requirements and credit score expectations can influence both approval chances and processing timelines. Evaluating these factors in advance can help reduce application friction and lead to faster loan disbursal. At the same time, borrowers should also check their eligibility with lenders with whom they have an existing relationship. Banks and NBFCs usually prefer borrowers from their existing customer base.

Interest rates

The interest rate on your personal loan influences the total cost of borrowing. Even a slight difference in interest rates can help save considerably over the course of the loan tenure. Therefore, the interest rate should be an important metric of comparison while choosing a lender.

However, a genuine point of confusion pertains to the actual cost of the loan for borrowers. Most usually consider only the interest rate, leaving behind other charges that add to the cost of the loan. For a holistic view, borrowers should rely not just on the advertised rate, but also on the Annual Percentage Rate (APR). The APR provides borrowers with a complete picture of all fees and charges associated with the loan.

Ease of borrowing

The borrowing experience also plays an important role in choosing the right lender. Features such as digital processes, minimum documentation, quick approvals, and easy repayment tracking can simplify loan application and management. This becomes more important, especially in cases where access to funds quickly is of utmost importance.

Tenure flexibility

While tenure flexibility should not be a primary deciding factor, those seeking repayment terms aligned with their cash flow should consider lenders offering flexibility. Additionally, look for lenders who do not have a lock-in period or strict prepayment or foreclosure terms. The loan tenure impacts the overall interest outgo and the monthly EMI affordability. Lenders having varying maximum loan amount thresholds are often preferred by applicants who need a higher loan amount. Choosing a lender that offers the required loan amount without stringent terms and conditions helps borrowers meet their financial needs smoothly.

Another important aspect borrowers should consider when choosing a lender is their regulatory standing. With the risk of fraud and an increase in the incidents of data breaches, choosing a dependable lender becomes all the more important. Borrowing from a reputed lender ensures transparent policies and reliable service throughout the loan tenure. Even in scenarios where offers from reputed lenders are few, borrowers should refrain from borrowing from lenders not regulated by the RBI.

(The writer is CEO, Paisabazaar)

The math of delay will be brutally unforgiving. ILLUSTRATION BY B. SAINATH

Why pension planning can no longer be optional

In modern India, growing old without being financially prepared is a risk many cannot afford as a government pension or the comfort of a large joint family can no longer be relied upon

RETIRE IN PEACE

Vishwajeet Goel

There was a time when retirement in India was largely someone else's responsibility. A government pension or the comfort of a large joint family often filled the gap. That reality, however, has changed quietly but decisively. Today, the burden of retirement security is shifting squarely onto individuals and households. If we do not plan early and deliberately, the cost of delay can quickly become overwhelming.

The uncomfortable truth is simple. In modern India, growing old without being financially prepared is a risk many households can no longer afford.

Pension gap is real

India has made visible progress in financial inclusion. Bank account ownership is widespread, and market linked retirement products are gaining traction.

Yet beneath the surface, the pension safety net remains thin.

Recent analysis shows that formal retirement schemes such as EPFO, NPS and Atal Pension Yojana together cover less than 25% of the workforce. That means the vast majority of India's working population is either underprepared or completely unprepared for retirement.

Even broader financial behaviour tells a similar story. While more than 78% of Indian adults have bank accounts, fewer than 14% participate in any formal pension or retirement scheme.

> Family structures are evolving and the traditional assumption that children will financially support ageing parents is becoming less reliable

At the same time, the organised pension ecosystem is expanding. The National Pension System alone had over 2.1 crore subscribers and assets of over ₹16 lakh crore by December 2025, reflecting strong growth in market linked retirement saving. The direction is encouraging. The scale of the gap is still daunting.

The math of delay is brutally unforgiving.

Consider a simple retirement goal. Assume an individual wants to build a retirement corpus of ₹5 crore by age 60 and expects a long term return of 12% through disciplined investing.

If the investor starts at age 30, the required monthly SIP is roughly ₹16,229. Delay the decision by just 10 years and start at 40, and the monthly requirement jumps sharply to about ₹54,357. Wait until age 50, and the number becomes daunting, with the required monthly investment rising to nearly ₹2.23 lakh.

> Inflation continues to erode purchasing power. What looks like a comfortable retirement corpus today may prove inadequate two or three decades later

The message is hard to ignore. The goal remains the same, but the cost of delay rises dramatically. In retirement planning, time does the heavy lifting. The longer we wait, the heavier the monthly burden becomes. This is the hidden tax of procrastination. We often focus on market timing, product selection, or short term returns. But the single most powerful variable in retirement planning remains time in the market, not timing the market.

Why the traditional safety nets are no longer enough: Several structural shifts are reshaping retirement risk in India.

First, life expectancy is rising. Indians are living longer, which is a positive development, but it also means retirement periods are stretching to 25 to 30 years in many cases.

Second, the nature of employment is changing. Gig work, self employment and informal work arrangements are expanding, most often without built in retirement benefits.

Third, family structures are evolving. The traditional assumption that children will financially support ageing parents is becoming less reliable in urban India.

Finally, inflation continues to erode purchasing power. What looks like a comfortable retirement corpus today may prove inadequate two or three decades later.

Taken together, these trends make one conclusion unavoidable. Pension planning is no longer optional. It is foundational financial planning.

The rise of market linked retirement solutions: The good news is India's retirement ecosystem is becoming more sophisticated and accessible.

Market linked options such as the National Pension System are gaining acceptance because they combine long term growth potential with disciplined accumulation. The rapid growth in NPS assets reflects this behavioural shift. These products matter because traditional approaches alone may struggle to beat long term inflation. For younger investors especially, exposure to equity through structured retirement vehicles can meaningfully improve outcomes over long horizons.

However, product availability is only half the story. Behavioural adoption remains the bigger challenge. The window is open, but not forever.

In today's India, wealth creation and retirement planning cannot be sequential goals. They must happen together.

(The writer is head, Pensionbazaar.com)

Personal Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
HDFC Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	Up to Rs 6,500
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 3.5%
State Bank of India	10.00-15.00	10,624-11,895	2,125-2,379	Up to 1.50% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 15,000)
ICICI Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	Up to 2%
Bank of Baroda*	10.15-18.00	10,660-12,710	2,132-2,542	Up to 2% (Max. Rs 10,000)
Axis Bank	9.50 onwards	10,501 onwards	2,100 onwards	Up to 2%
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 5%
Bank of India	10.85-16.15	10,834-12,199	2,167-2,440	Up to 1% (Min. Rs 250; Max. Rs 15,000)
Canara Bank	9.70-15.15	10,550-11.934	2,110-2,387	0.50% (Rs 1,000 - Rs 5,000)
Punjab National Bank	10.25-16.80	10,685-12,373	2,137-2,475	Up to 1%
HSBC Bank	9.95 onwards	10,611 onwards	2,122 onwards	Up to 2%
Federal Bank	11.75 - 18.99	11,059 - 12,968	2,212 - 2,594	Up to 3%
Union Bank of India	8.75 - 12.55	10,319-11,262	2,064-2,252	Up to 1% (Max. Rs 7,500)
Bajaj Finserv	10.00-30.00	10,624-16,177	2,125-3,235	Up to 3.93%
Punjab & Sind Bank	9.60-13.85	10,525-11,595	2,105-2,319	0.50%-1%
Indian Overseas Bank	10.25 onwards	10,685 onwards	2,137 onwards	Up to 0.75%
UCO Bank	9.95 - 13.20	10,611-11,428	2,122-2,286	Up to 1% (Min. Rs 750)
IDFC FIRST Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	Up to 3.5%
Bank of Maharashtra	8.75-13.55	10,319-11,518	2,064-2,304	Up to 1% (Max. Rs 10,000)
Central Bank of India	9.85-11.65	10,587-11,034	2,117-2,207	Up to 1%
IndusInd Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to 3.5% (2% for instant personal loans for limited period)

*Interest concession of 0.10% to customers opting for group credit life insurance
Rates and charges as of March 11

Car Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
Union Bank of India	7.40-9.45	9,995 - 10,489	Up to Rs 1,000
Punjab National Bank	7.55-10.70	10,031 - 10,797	Up to 0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 1,500)
Bank of Baroda	7.60 - 11.35	10,043 - 10,959	Up to Rs. 2,000
Canara Bank	7.45-11.45	10,007 - 10,984	0.25% (Rs 1,000 - Rs 5,000)
Bank of India	7.60-12.55	10,043 - 11,262	Up to 0.25% (Rs. 2,500 - Rs. 10,000)
UCO Bank	7.35-10.00	9,983 - 10,624	0.5% (Max. Rs 5,000)
State Bank of India	8.70 - 9.85	10,355 - 10,587	Rs 750 - Rs 1,500
Bank of Maharashtra*	7.45-11.75	10,007 - 11,059	NIL
Indian Overseas Bank	7.55-12.00	10,031 - 11,122	NIL
ICICI Bank	8.50 onwards	10,258 onwards	Up to 2%
HDFC Bank	8.20 onwards	10,186 onwards	Up to 0.5% (Rs. 3,500 - Rs. 8,000)
Karnataka Bank	8.00-11.50	10,138 - 10,996	Up to 0.60% (Rs. 2,500 - Rs. 11,000)
Federal Bank	7.60-9.00	10,198 onwards	Rs. 2,000 - Rs. 4,500
Punjab and Sind Bank**	7.50-14.00	10,019 - 11,634	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 15,000)
Indian Bank	7.50-9.65	10,019 - 10,513	Rs. 1,200
IDFC FIRST Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	Up to Rs. 10,000
Central Bank of India	7.60-9.20	10,043 - 10,428	No processing fees till 31.03.2026

*0.25% interest rate concession for home loan borrowers/customers with at least 6 months of relationship with bank.
**Concession of up to 50% on processing fee for PSB Apna Vahan Sugam.
Rates and charges as on March 11 **Source: Paisabazaar.com**

To adjust or not to adjust the benchmark

THINKINVESTOR

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

Alpha is the excess return a portfolio generates over an "appropriate" benchmark. An "appropriate" benchmark means a fund's alpha will be useful for evaluation only if it holds stocks from the chosen benchmark. Regulation allows large-cap funds to invest not more than 20% in stocks outside of the benchmark. So, comparison of a large-cap fund's performance to its benchmark may not be technically meaningful. Previously in this column, we discussed why a blended benchmark (say, 80% large-cap and 20% mid-cap index) may be optimal. Such blended benchmarks are not easy to create for individual investors. In this article, we discuss when it is acceptable, though not necessarily accurate, to compare large-cap fund performance to its large-cap benchmark.

Relative performance

Relative performance is important for active funds. This relative performance works at two levels. At the first level is the comparison of the fund's performance with its benchmark index. This determines the fund's alpha. Is the fund true to its benchmark? If not, it is preferable to create an appropriate benchmark to evaluate the fund. At the second level is peer comparison. How has the fund performed relative to its peers in the large-cap style universe? It is this comparison that we discuss below.

Enabled by the SEBI regulation, most large-cap funds invest in mid-cap stocks within the 20% limit. But the decision to invest outside the benchmark is choice of a fund manager. A fund manager will invest in mid-cap stocks only if she believes that mid-caps will outperform large-cap stocks. So, choosing to invest outside the benchmark is an active decision. This decision can result in positive alpha, which is function of both skill and luck. Hence, comparing a fund's alpha with its peers without adjusting for the outside-benchmark investment may be acceptable.

Conclusion

It is accurate to evaluate a large-cap active fund using an appropriate blended benchmark.

The argument is that the fund must have outperformed the benchmark despite carrying similar risk. This argument is meaningful if you are investing in large-cap funds to achieve your life goals. Why? Exposure to mid-cap stocks can be risky.

A blended benchmark can help you understand how strongly the fund's returns are related to the mid-cap stock performance.

When you are investing surplus cash in a large-cap fund, it is more practical to use the given benchmark, as the primary objective is to earn consistently higher alpha returns compared with peers.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

SEOUL

North Korea conducts test of nuclear-capable rocket launchers

AFP

North Korea tested nuclear-capable rocket launchers, state media reported on Sunday, a day after Seoul detected the launch of around 10 ballistic missiles. The country's leader Kim Jong-un oversaw the testing on Saturday of the multiple rocket launcher system (MRLS), the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said. AFP

DUBAI

UAE orders expedited trial of 10 for publishing misleading video

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has ordered the arrest and urgent trial of 10 people of various nationalities for publishing video clips containing misleading content. UAE Attorney-General Dr Hamad Saif Al Shamsi said the under trial circulated fabricated footage created using AI to falsely suggest explosions and strikes. PTI

TAMMUN

Israeli soldiers fire on family car in occupied West Bank, killing four

AFP

Israeli soldiers fired on a car carrying a family in the northern West Bank, killing four persons including two children, the Palestinian Authority's Health Ministry said. The Palestinian Red Crescent rescue service said that Ali and Waed Odeh, and two of their four children, were shot in the head. AP

PARIS

Iran says women's football captain withdraws Australia asylum bid

AFP

Zahra Ghanbari, the captain of the Iranian women's football team which played in the Asian Cup in Australia, has withdrawn her bid for asylum, state media said on Sunday, making her the fifth member to change her mind. A former player said the players had been pressured to reverse their stance through threats. AFP

U.S. not ready for deal with Iran, might hit Kharg 'for fun': Trump

Trump says Iran wants a deal but he rejected it because the terms are not favourable enough yet; IRGC vows to hunt down and kill Netanyahu, labelling him a criminal; despite Trump's appeals to allies to send warships, no commitments emerge

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump warned that he is not ready to seek a deal to end the war with Iran, as U.S. ally Israel launched a new wave of strikes on Sunday and Tehran's Revolutionary Guards threatened to hunt down and kill the Israeli leader.

Mr. Trump, in an interview with *NBC News*, said he thought Tehran was keen to come to the table but that Washington would fight on for better terms and might bomb targets on Kharg Island "a few more times just for fun".

"Iran wants to make a deal, and I don't want to make it because the terms aren't good enough yet," Mr. Trump told *NBC News*, warning that U.S. forces would step up strikes on the Iranian coast north of the strait to clear a path for oil shipments to resume.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Iran was not interested in talks with the United States, pushing back on Mr. Trump's stance that Tehran wants a deal to end the war. He added that Tehran has "ample evidence" U.S. bases in the West Asia have been used to attack Iran, claiming missiles were launched from the UAE to attack the Kharg Island oil hub.

Past the Dome: Israeli Army soldiers gather at the site of a projectile impact from an Iranian strike in southern Tel Aviv on Sunday. AFP

Despite Mr. Trump's appeal to China, France, Japan, South Korea, Britain and others to send warships to keep the Strait of Hormuz "open and safe", no country stepped forward with a commitment on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military announced a wave of strikes against targets in Western Iran, after Iran's Revolutionary Guards branded Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a criminal and vowed that they would pursue and kill him.

IRGC said they had carried out missile and drone strikes on targets in Israel and three U.S. bases in the region, calling the attacks the first round of retaliation for workers killed in Iran's industrial areas. At least eight persons were injured in Israel following repeated missile launches, at least two of which contained cluster munitions, according to Israeli authorities.

(With Reuters inputs)

Israel's Saar denies reports of 'direct' Lebanon talks

Reuters
ZAZIR

Israel's Foreign Minister on Sunday denied reports that Israel could soon hold direct talks with Lebanon and rejected claims it had told the United States it was running low on interceptors.

Asked about the weekend reports, Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said: "For the two questions, the answer is no."

Meanwhile, Lebanon's Health Ministry said Israeli attacks have killed 850 people in the country during two weeks of war between Israel and Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah, including 66 women, 107 children and 32 health workers, with 2,105 wounded.

Hezbollah said its fighters targeted an Israeli air base south of Tel Aviv on Sunday, as Israel has kept up strikes on Lebanon, adding that it targeted the Palmachim air base with "an advanced missile", after claiming other attacks on sites in northern Israel.

Overnight strikes in southern Lebanon killed at least four persons, Lebanese state media and the government said on Sunday.

The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon said its peacekeepers were fired upon three times, "likely by non-state armed groups", in the country's south, two days after another position was hit.

(With AFP inputs)

A damaged building following an Israeli strike on a healthcare centre in Borj Qalaouiya, southern Lebanon, on Sunday. REUTERS

Sri Lanka adopts QR code-based fuel sales, calls it 'precautionary measure'

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka on Sunday switched to a digital QR code-based system to ration fuel sales, a move authorities described as a "precautionary measure" amid persisting uncertainty in West Asia.

Citing "prevailing geopolitical developments" in West Asia and their adverse impact on global supply chains, Sri Lanka's Ministry of Energy said the country's existing fuel stocks were depleting amid an "abnormal increase" in demand. "Therefore, it has become necessary to carefully manage the available fuel reserves in order to sustain the country's economic activities," it said in a public notice announcing the switch to a QR code system.

Sri Lankans last used a QR code-aided system in 2022 when the island's economy crashed, resulting in critical shortages and long queues for fuel. The move requires consumers to register and download a QR code specific to their vehicle for use at fuel stations.

The weekly quota for cars and motorbikes is limited to 15 litres and 5 litres, respectively. Following the announcement on Sunday, several vehicles queued up at fuel sheds around Colombo.

Essential need: Motorists wait in queues to refuel their vehicles at a filling station in Wellampitiya, near Colombo, on Sunday. AFP

Deputy Minister of Industry Chathuranga Abeysinghe told *The Hindu* that Sri Lanka had adequate stocks at the moment and the decision to moderate fuel supply to consumers was more of a strategy for "prudent, rational usage". "With the ongoing uncertainty, this will help us preserve and extend our stock as much as possible," he said, adding: "We have confirmation from the Indian Oil Corporation that supply will be ensured."

IOC subsidiary, Lanka IOC, controls around 20% of Sri Lanka's retail market, which is dominated by the state-owned Ceylon Petroleum Corporation.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake convened a series of meetings on Sunday to discuss the maintenance of essential services and fuel supplies, and directed officials to study the option of remote working to save on national fuel consumption.

"As it is difficult to make accurate predictions regarding possible future developments, the President emphasised the need for advance preparedness to face any potential situation that may arise," a statement from his office said.

'Ukraine wants tech and money in return for help with drones'

Reuters
KYIV

Ukraine wants money and technology in return for helping West Asian nations defend against Iranian kamikaze drones, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, after Kyiv sent specialists to four countries in the region.

Mr. Zelenskyy told presspersons in comments cleared for release on Sunday that each of the three teams sent to the West Asia consisted of dozens of people, who will conduct expert assessments and demonstrate how drone defences should operate.

Gulf states have expended large quantities of air-defence missiles to counter Iran's attack drones and have sought Ukraine's expertise in downing them. Kyiv downs Russian drones every night using an array of weaponry including cheaper, smaller drones or jamming equipment.

Mr. Zelenskyy also said that he was unsure whether Ukraine and the U.S. would sign a deal on drone co-operation.

KERA
KERALA CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRI VALUE CHAIN MODERNISATION PROJECT (KERA)

SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT NOTICE

The Project Director, Kerala Climate Resilient Agri Value Chain Modernisation (KERA) Project (The World Bank Project ID No.: P178254) invites bids for the following tender from eligible vendors:

1. Tender ID: 2026_KERA_847576
Goods: IT equipment for Agriculture Department, VFPCK, Rubber Board & Soil Survey and Soil Conservation Department (Ref. No. KERA/SPMU/01/RFB/GOODS/2026)

Last date of submission of Bid is 16th April 2026, 11:30 AM

The tender Document can be downloaded from Kerala eTender portal starting from 17th March 2026, 11:00 AM.
(https://etenders.kerala.gov.in/nicgep/app)

KERA
KERALA CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRI VALUE CHAIN MODERNISATION PROJECT (KERA)

PROCUREMENT NOTICE

The Project Director, Kerala Climate Resilient Agri Value Chain Modernisation (KERA) Project (The World Bank Project ID No.: P178254) invites proposals for the following tender from eligible vendors:

1. Tender ID: 2026_KERA_847459
Consulting services: Hiring of IT firm to Design, Development, Implementation, Operations & Maintenance of KERA Integrated Project Management System (IPMS) and MIS Dashboard Portal

Last date of submission of Proposal is 22nd April 2026, 11:30 AM

The tender Document can be downloaded from e-tender Kerala portal starting from 23rd March 2026, 11:00 AM.
(https://etenders.kerala.gov.in/nicgep/app)

BREAKTHROUGH

An emotional Antonelli thanks his team after realising dream

REUTERS

He has been defined as Lewis Hamilton's successor and George Russell's teammate at Mercedes. Now Kimi Antonelli is a Formula1 race-winner. "I am speechless. I am about to cry. Thank you so much to my team because they helped me achieve this dream," said the 19-year-old after his win at the Chinese GP.

HUNGRY FOR MORE

Ferrari has its work cut out to beat Mercedes, admits Hamilton

GETTY IMAGES

It is really special to see Mercedes back at the front because it is a phenomenal team. I know that we have got our work cut out to beat it. Because when it is on form like this, it is not easy to beat it — Ferrari driver Lewis Hamilton on competition with Mercedes for the rest of the Formula One season.

WAR FALLOUT

Bahrain and Saudi F1 races to be a non-starter in April due to conflict

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

The Formula One races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have been cancelled as the West Asia war engulfs the region. "While several alternatives were considered, it was ultimately decided that no substitutions will be made in April," said the International Automobile Federation (FIA), the motorsport governing body.

VICTORY TO SAVOUR

Bangladesh edges Pakistan in a thriller, takes ODI series

AFP

Bangladesh won the three-match ODI series against Pakistan 2-1 after recording a thrilling 11-run win in the final match in Dhaka on Sunday. **The scores:** Bangladesh 290/5 in 50 overs (Tanzid Hasan 107, Litton Das 41, Towhid Hridoy 48 n.o.) bt Pakistan 279 in 50 overs (Salman Agha 106, Taskin Ahmed 4/49).

Antonelli drives an almost flawless race for maiden win

The Italian becomes the second-youngest to claim a Grand Prix after Verstappen; Mercedes' early dominance continues after another 1-2 finish; Hamilton secures his first podium with Ferrari; both McLarens fail to start the race

CHINESE GP

Agencies
SHANGHAI

An emotional Kimi Antonelli won a Grand Prix for the first time on Sunday.

In the Chinese GP, the 19-year-old finished ahead of Mercedes teammate George Russell and Lewis Hamilton, who secured his maiden podium for Ferrari.

Antonelli converted being the youngest pole-sitter in Formula One history into victory after both McLarens dramatically failed to start the Shanghai race.

The only driver younger than Antonelli to win a Grand Prix is Max Verstappen, who was 18 when he bagged his first victory in 2016.

Antonelli briefly lost the lead at the start but once he got back in front, he controlled the pace to cruise home by more than five seconds from Russell. Charles Leclerc was fourth in the second Ferrari.

It was a flawless drive from the youngster, apart from one heart-fluttering moment when he locked up at the hairpin on his penultimate lap.

But he recovered to avoid nothing more damaging than a small excursion off track.

Four-time World champion Max Verstappen continued Red Bull's poor start to the new season when he was told to retire his car on lap 46.

Oliver Bearman was fifth in the Haas, followed home by Pierre Gasly (Alpine) and Liam Lawson (RB).

The results:
1. Antonelli (Mercedes) 1h 33m 15.607s, 2. Russell (Mercedes) +5.515s, 3. Hamilton (Ferrari) +25.267s, 4. Leclerc (Ferrari) +28.894s, 5. Bearman (Haas) +57.268s, 6. Gasly (Alpine) +59.647s, 7. Lawson (Racing Bulls) +1m 20.588s, 8. Hadjar (Red Bull) +1m 27.247s, 9. Sainz Jr (Williams).
+1 lap, 10. Colapinto (Alpine) +1 lap, 11. Hulkenberg (Audi) +1 lap, 12. Lindblad (Racing Bulls) +1 lap, 13. Bottas (Cadillac) +1 lap, 14. Ocon (Haas) +1 lap, 15. Perez (Cadillac) +1 lap.
Retirements: 10th lap: Stroll (Aston Martin), **33rd lap:** Alonso (Aston Martin), **46th lap:** Verstappen (Red Bull).
DNS: Bortoleto (Audi), Piastri (McLaren), Norris (McLaren), Albon (Williams).
Championship: Drivers: 1. Russell 51 points, 2. Antonelli 47, 3. Leclerc 34, 4. Hamilton 33, 5. Bearman 17, 6. Norris 15, 7. Gasly 9, 8. Verstappen 8, 9. Lawson 8, 10. Lindblad 4, 11. Hadjar 4, 12. Piastri 3, 13. Bortoleto 2, 14. Sainz Jr 2, 15. Colapinto 1.
Constructors: 1. Mercedes 98 points, 2. Ferrari 67, 3. McLaren 18, 4. Haas 17, 5. Red Bull 12, 6. Racing Bulls 12, 7. Alpine 10, 8. Audi 2, 9. Williams 2.

Lights to flag

THE JOURNEY IN NUMBERS AFTER THE 56-LAP RACE IN SHANGHAI

1 Antonelli is the first Italian to win a Formula 1 race since Fisichella (2006 Malaysian GP)

1 With his first podium for Ferrari in his 26th race for the team, Hamilton has become the first driver to have podium finishes with three of Formula One's most successful teams (Mercedes 153 and McLaren 49)

2 Antonelli (19y 202d) is the second youngest F1 winner after Verstappen (18y 228d), and the youngest ever to convert pole position to victory

2 Leclerc overtakes Raikkonen to become second in the list of most Ferrari starts

7 For the seventh successive season, Verstappen has failed to finish on the podium in the race immediately preceding the Japanese GP

1 Hamilton has shared the podium with Rosberg, Russell and Antonelli in each of their first F1 wins

7 Mercedes has registered 1-2 finishes at each of the first two Grands Prix in a season for the first time since 2019 (Hamilton and Bottas), making it the seventh time in F1 history

13 Ferrari and Mercedes have extended their record for most podium finishes in China

14 Hamilton has extended his record of points-scoring finishes at the Chinese GP

17 Bearman's strong start to 2026 has seen him garner more points than the last two World champions (Norris 15 and Verstappen 8)

20 Hamilton's first Ferrari podium in China has come 20 years after fellow seven-time F1 World champion Schumacher's final podium with the Prancing Horse at the same venue

34 This is the first podium made up exclusively of British and Italian drivers in 34 years (Mansell, Patrese and Brundle at the 1992 British GP)

51 For the first time after more than five decades, an Italian has taken the top spot and two British drivers have completed the podium (Brambilla, Hunt and Pryce. 1975 Austrian GP)

X@F1

Compiled by ANIRUDH VELAMURI & S. DIPAK RAGAV

Well deserved: Project Nanhi Kali honoured with the Sports for Social Good award. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Project Nanhi Kali expands opportunities for Indian girls

Sports Bureau
MUMBAI

Project Nanhi Kali was honoured with the Sports for Social Good award at the *Sportstar* Aces Awards 2026, a recognition for its long-standing work empowering girls from underserved communities through education and sport.

The award was presented by Nirmala Lakshman, Chairperson of *The Hindu* Group, and K. C. Vijaya Kumar, Sports Editor of *The Hindu*. It was received by Sheetal Mehta, Trustee and Executive Director of K.C. Mahindra Education Trust, Swati Srivastava, VP, Partnerships, Project Nanhi Kali, and Farida Balsara, Senior VP and Group Head - CSR, Business and Legal Governance.

Ten beneficiaries of the programme were also present at the ceremony, a reminder of the young lives the initiative continues to shape. "We are deeply honoured that Project Nanhi Kali has been recognised alongside icons from the sporting world at the *Sportstar* Aces Awards 2026," said Sheetal.

"For our girls, football is more than just a sport. It is a powerful platform to build leadership, resilience and confidence to shape their own futures. Receiving the Sports for Social Good award is both a rewarding and humbling moment," Sheetal added.

Launched in 1996, the programme has supported more than 8.7 lakh girls in 15 States, primarily those studying in government schools. Its reach spans regions including Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra, Punjab, UP, Odisha and West Bengal.

Sport became a key component of the initiative with the launch of Sports for Life in 2018, a grassroots effort promoting fitness, confidence and leadership. In FY25, the programme engaged approximately 94,000 girls, formed over 1,000 teams involving more than 18,000 participants in football. By combining education, sport and leadership development, Project Nanhi Kali continues to expand opportunities for girls across India.

Truly special

IndianOil Corporation Limited won the Best PSU for Promotion of Sport award.

"Deeply honoured to receive the award from *The Hindu* Group and *Sportstar*, institutions that have consistently celebrated and shaped the spirit of sporting excellence in India. This recognition, received for the third time, is truly special and reaffirms IndianOil's four-decade commitment to nurturing sporting talent and strengthening India's sporting ecosystem.

"It strengthens our belief that when we invest in our athletes, India's limitless sporting potential shines even brighter," said Bibhuti Ranjan Pradhan, Executive Director (CD&CSR) and In-Charge of Sports, IndianOil.

Dowman's show and Man City's draw put Arsenal in control

EURO LEAGUES

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Max Dowman, 16, propelled Arsenal closer to the title by becoming the Premier League's youngest ever goalscorer in a dramatic 2-0 win against Everton on Saturday while Manchester City stumbled in a 1-1 draw at West Ham United.

Mikel Arteta's men are edging towards a first league title in 22 years as their advantage over City, which has a game in hand, now stands at nine points.

Arsenal struggled to break down obdurate Everton until the teenage substitute turned the game in the final moments.

Viktor Gyokeres finally found a way through in the 89th minute, with a helping hand from Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford, who flapped at Dowman's cross.

There was still time for Dowman to run the length of the pitch and slot into an empty net with Pickford coming up for an Everton corner in stoppage time.

Aged just 16 years and 73 days, Dowman is now the youngest scorer in Premier League and Arsenal's history.

City's season is in danger of coming off the rails as West Ham clung on for a point that lifted it out of the relegation zone for the first time in three months.

In LaLiga, Barcelona thrashed Sevilla 5-2 to restore its four-point lead on Sunday after Real Madrid beat Elche on Saturday.

The results: Premier League: Crystal Palace 0 drew with Leeds 0; Manchester United 3 (Casemiro 53, Cunha 71, Sesko 81) bt Aston Villa 1 (Barkley 64); Liverpool 1 (Szoboszlai 18) drew with Tottenham 1 (Richarlison 90).
LaLiga: Barcelona 5 (Raphinha 9-pen, 21-pen, 51, Olmo 38, Cancelo 60) bt Sevilla 2 (Oso 45+4, Sow 90+2).

On Saturday:
Premier League: Sunderland 0 lost to Brighton 1 (Minteh 58); Burnley 0 drew with Bournemouth 0; Chelsea 0 lost to Newcastle 1 (Gordon 18); Arsenal 2 (Gyokeres 89, Dowman 90+7) bt Everton 0; West Ham 1 (Mavropanos 35) drew with Manchester City 1 (Silva 31).
LaLiga: Atletico Madrid 1 (Molina 8) bt Getafe 0; Real Madrid 4 (Rudiger 39, Valverde 45, Huijsen 66, Guler 89) bt Elche 1 (Manuel Angel 85).
Serie A: Napoli 2 (Hojlund 46, Politano 67) bt Lecce 1 (Siebert 3); Udinese 0 lost to Juventus 1 (Boga 38).

Making history: Dowman rolls the ball into an open Everton goal to become Premier League's and Arsenal's youngest scorer. REUTERS

Gill and Smriti win top honours at BCCI awards

Special occasion: Binny, Dravid, and Mithali receive the Col. C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award from ICC chair Jay Shah on Sunday. BCCI

CRICKET

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Shubman Gill and Smriti Mandhana were named the Best International Cricketers at the BCCI Naman Awards 2026 here on Sunday, recognising their outstanding performances in the 2024-25 season.

Gill won the prestigious Polly Umrigar Award, while Smriti received the honour for the fifth time. For Gill, it was his second Cricketer of the Year award after first winning it in 2023.

Legends Roger Binny, Rahul Dravid and Mithali Raj were honoured with the Col. C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award, the BCCI's highest honour.

Gill enjoyed a stellar 2025. On the tour of England, he led from the front in the five-Test series, finishing as the top run-getter with 754 runs in 10 innings. The 26-year-old also played a pivotal role in India's Champions Trophy triumph last year. He made an unbeaten 101 against Bangladesh in India's opening match, and ended the tournament with 188 runs.

Smriti finished 2025 with 1,703 international runs, including 1,362 in ODIs, the most by any woman in a calendar year. In doing so, the left-hander also became the first batter in women's ODI history to score 1,000 runs in a calendar year. The Indian vice-captain aggregated 434 runs in nine matches during the team's maiden ODI World Cup title triumph.

Major award winners
Col. C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award: Roger Binny, Rahul Dravid and Mithali Raj.
Best International Cricketer (men): Shubman Gill.
Best International Cricketer (women): Smriti Mandhana.
Best International debut (men): Harshit Rana.
Best International debut (women): Shree Charani.

Pole vaulter Baranica makes Asiad grade

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

JSW's Pooja claimed the women's high jump crown in the fifth Indian Open jumps competition at the Anju Bobby High Performance Centre here on Sunday.

Pooja's 1.76m winning effort fell short of the qualification standard for the Asian Games 2026 (1.80m) and Commonwealth Games 2026 (1.92m).

Tamil Nadu's Baranica Elangovan won women's pole vault, and attained the Asian Games 2026 mark (4.10m).

With 2003 World Championships long jump bronze medallist Anju Bobby George in attendance, Mubassina Mohammed won the women's long jump gold.

The Lakshadweep-born Mubassina, now representing Anju Bobby Sports Foundation, finished ahead of nearest rival Bhavani Yadav (6.27m) with her sixth and final jump of 6.38m.

The results (winners): Men: Under-20: Long jump: K. Yuvaraj (NCOE, Tvm), 7.63m. **Under-18: Long jump:** Rajeev Roy (NCOE, Trivandrum), 7.45m. **Women: Pole vault:** Baranica Elangovan (TN), 4.10m. **Long jump:** Mubassina Mohammed (Anju Bobby Sports Foundation), 6.38m. **High jump:** Pooja (JSW), 1.76m. **Triple jump:** Mallala Anusha (AP), 13.18m. **Under-20: Long jump:** Tamanna (Har), 5.93m. **High jump:** Pooja (Anju Bobby Sports Foundation), 1.74m. **Under-18: High jump:** R. Harshini (TN), 1.50m. **Long jump:** Kashish (Har), 5.58m.

Bittersweet: Pooja won women's high jump but missed out on Asian Games qualification. SUDHAKARA JAIN

INBRIEF

Debutant Mokoena stars in South Africa's clinical win

A new-look South Africa scythed through New Zealand's batting line-up to comfortably win Sunday's first T20I at Mount Maunganui by seven wickets, with 20 balls to spare.

The scores: New Zealand 91 in 14.3 overs (Neesham 26, Mokoena 3/26) lost to South Africa 93/3 in 16.4 overs (Esterhuizen 45 n.o.). **Toss**: New Zealand. **PoM**: Mokoena.

Qatar MotoGP moved from next month to November

The Qatar Grand Prix scheduled to be held next month has been postponed due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, MotoGP announced on Sunday. The Lusail International Circuit was set to host the fourth round from April 10-12 but it has now been rescheduled for November 8.

Spain, Argentina 'Finalissima' cancelled, says UEFA

The 'Finalissima' clash between Euro 2024 winner Spain and World champion Argentina set to take place on March 27 in Qatar has been cancelled, UEFA said on Sunday. It said it was "not possible to reach agreement with Argentina" over an alternative date and location.

Former Pakistan captain Sarfaraz calls it a day

Former Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed retired from international cricket on Sunday after leading the country in 100 international matches across multiple formats. Sarfaraz scored 6,164 runs across multiple formats, including six centuries and 35 half-centuries. He represented Pakistan in 54 Tests, 117 ODIs and 61 T20Is. He held 315 catches and effected 56 stumpings.

Penalty-corner conversion is a real concern for Indian women's team

Coach Marijne admits that it was an issue during the World Cup Qualifiers, but stresses he drew positives from the campaign

HOCKEY

Anirudh Velamuri
HYDERABAD

India didn't have a flawless FIH Women's World Cup Qualifiers campaign at the G.M.C. Balayogi Hockey Ground here, but it left the tournament with its main target achieved – qualification for the marquee event secured without any trouble.

The statistics from India's run tell a story: three wins, one draw, one defeat, 11 goals scored and five conceded in what was head coach Sjoerd Marijne's first tournament since returning for his second stint. Yet beneath those numbers lies a familiar concern – finishing.

Former chief coaches Janneke Schopman and Harendra Singh, and perhaps Marijne himself will attest to it. The Dutchman admitted that India can do much better after the 0-2 loss to England in Saturday's final. "They (England) got two penalty corners and scored from one of them. We got four and didn't score any," Marijne said.

While decision-making and better positioning in the circles are areas to be worked on, penalty-corner conversion is the more pressing concern. "If you don't score off your PCs, you must score with your field opportunities. But PCs, most of the time, help in breaking the contest. That's what we needed. Unfortunately, that didn't happen," Marijne added.

That said, there were positives as well. "I saw how the girls reacted in the semifinal and final, how they performed under pressure. You can't do that in a training camp; you can't replicate this pressure. I could see a lot of (good) things, which I will keep for myself," he said, grinning.

"We're playing more give-and-go hockey, which is something that we have improved on. We're also creating plenty of opportunities. When you're coming into a team, you want to improve 20 things. But you cannot do that. You make a list of five or 10 things, and you take it from there. That's why the information I got from these matches is so important".

Just not enough: India couldn't cross the final hurdle on Saturday. NAGARA GOPAL

Rich haul: The Indian contingent with BFI President Ajay Singh, second from left, second row, and World Boxing president Gennadiy Golovkin, third from right, second row. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Gold for Chandrika as India bags five medals

Press Trust of India
BANGKOK

India concluded its campaign at the World Boxing Futures Cup with a haul of five medals, including one gold, here on Sunday. Chandrika Pujari delivered a commanding performance in the women's 51kg final to defeat Uzbekistan's Mardonova Nazokat with a unanimous decision.

Three Indians finished with silver. Gunjan (48kg) lost to her opponent from England 0-5 while Joyshree Devi (54kg) lost 1-4 to a boxer from USA in the finals.

In men's 50kg, L. Ambekar Meetei returned silver after losing to a boxer from Ukraine.

Medvedev snaps Alcaraz's streak

TENNIS

Agence France-Presse
INDIAN WELLS

Daniil Medvedev ended Carlos Alcaraz's perfect start to 2026, stunning the World No. 1 6-3, 7-6(3) on Saturday, to book an Indian Wells title clash with Jannik Sinner.

Medvedev avenged losses to Alcaraz in back-to-back Indian Wells finals in 2023 and 2024, using an impressive service display and aggressive play from the baseline to keep the Spanish star on the back foot throughout. He will have his task cut out in the clash with four-time Grand Slam champion Sinner, who beat fourth-ranked Alexander Zverev 6-2, 6-4.

The results: Men: Semifinals: Daniil Medvedev (Rus) bt Carlos Alcaraz (Esp) 6-3, 7-6(3); Jannik Sinner (Ita) bt Alexander Zverev (Ger) 6-2, 6-4.

On the winning side: Medvedev avenged losses to Alcaraz in back-to-back Indian Wells finals in 2023 and 2024. REUTERS

Rishabh on song as North outplays South

J.K. BOSE

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

North Zone moved closer to the J.K. Bose inter-zonal T20 title with a 10-wicket win against South Zone at the Roshanara Cricket Ground here on Sunday. Opener Rishabh Singh starred for North with an unbeaten 100 off 54 balls, his second century of the competition.

The tournament is being played as part of the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Sports Journalists' Federation of India's (SJFI) national convention.

In the other match, West defeated East by an identical margin. Taus Rizvi struck an unbeaten 58 while Devendra Pandey made 50 not out as the opening pair helped West chase down the target of 133 with ease.

North, which faces East on Monday, can clinch the title with a win.

The scores: South Zone 187/4 in 20 overs (Shiva Krishna 89 n.o., V.L. Sashank 50) lost to North Zone 188/0 in 18.2 overs (Rishabh Singh 100 n.o., Akash Rawal 38 retd. hurt, Amit 33 n.o.).
East Zone 132/7 in 20 overs (Sandeep Mishra 37, Sakal Sandha 35, Devendra Pandey 2/16) lost to West Zone 133/0 in 12.2 overs (Taus Rizvi 58 n.o., Devendra Pandey 50 n.o.).

LIVE TELECAST

ISL: Sony Sports Ten 2 & FanCode, 7.30 p.m.
Premier League: SS Select 2 & JioHotstar, 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)
Serie A: DAZN, 1.15 a.m. (Tuesday)
LaLiga: FanCode, 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)

Rishabh remains optimistic, focuses on Asian and Olympic Games

ARCHERY

Y.B. Sarangi
KOLKATA

Compound archer Rishabh Yadav has taken a minor slump, following his breakthrough year, in his stride as he focuses on the upcoming Asian Games and the 2028 Olympics.

The 23-year-old, who won medals in the World Championships, World Games, and World Cup stages in 2025, finished sixth in the first Open selection trials for the Asian Games and the first two World Cup stages.

Thanking his long-time mentor Abhishek Verma for his continuous guidance, Rishabh aimed to do well in the second selection trials and get into the Indian side for the Asian Games. "The Vegas Shoot [March 27 to 29] offered more world ranking points but I chose the Asia Cup stage.

"This is the best opportunity to prepare for the Asian Games as there will be good participation," said Rishabh, while expecting stiff competition among the top-10 Indian archers in the trials for Asian Games berths.

Prepared: Rishabh is expecting stiff competition among the top-10 archers in the trials for Asian Games berths. GETTY IMAGES

Beyond the Asiad, Rishabh, who played a crucial role in helping India secure its maiden men's team gold (with Prathamesh Fuge and Aman Saini) and a mixed team silver (with V. Jyothi Surekha) in the 2025 Gwangju World championships, is keen to shine in the Olympics where compound archery will make its debut with the mixed team event.

Nonpariel primed to extend his winning run

HYDERABAD: The five-year-old Nonpariel, who is unbeaten in his last six starts, may score an encore in the Time And Place Plate, the chief event of Monday's (Mar. 16) races.

1 OWN OPINION PLATE (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 3.00 p.m.: 1. Double Bubble (9) Sonu K 60, 2. Beverley (2) P. Ajeeth K 57, 3. Nkalanzinzi (8) B. Nikhil 56, 4. La Fleuriere (5) Trevor 55.5, 5. See My Attitude (12) Rafique Sk. 53.5, 6. Special Star (6) Ajay K 53.5, 7. Star Councillor (1) G. naresh 53.5, 8. Sugriva (7) Md. Ismail 53.5, 9. Zindabad (13) Santosh Raj 53.5, 10. Daring Spirit (11) P. Sai K 53, 11. Sucker Punch (4) H.M. Akshay 52.5, 12. Kitsune (14) Afroz K 52, 13. Quintessential (10) Surya Prakash 52 and 14. Varada (3) D.S. Deora 52.
1. DOUBLE BUBBLE, 2. LA FLEURIERE, 3. SPECIAL STAR

2 ELUSIVE HERO PLATE (1,400m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 3.35: 1. Armstrong (2) Md. Ekram 60, 2. Federer (7) H.M. Akshay 59, 3. Miss Smiley Angel (8) Sonu K 59, 4. Misty Night (6) Akshay K 58.5, 5. Corte Madera (4) Suraj Narredu 58, 6. Certainty (5) Kuldeep Sr. 56, 7. Mystical Dawn (1) P. Ajeeth K 54.5, 8. Torobravo (10) P. Sai K 54, 9. Tiger Ruby (9) Surya Prakash 53 and 10. Shoolin (3) D.S. Deora 52.5.
1. CORTE MADERA, 2. MYSTICAL DAWN, 3. MISS SMILEY ANGEL

3 DEMOCRACY PLATE (1, 600m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 4.05: 1. Arizona Sun (3) Akshay K 60, 2. Cape May (5) Suraj Narredu 58.5, 3. Das (2) Rafique Sk. 56.5, 4. Shubrak (8) Surya Prakash 56.5, 5. Real Thalaiva (1) D.S. Deora 52.5, 6. Sadiya (9) H.M. Akshay 52.5, 7. Silver Arrow (4) P. Sai K 52, 8. Whistledown (6) P. Ajeeth K 52 and 9. American Gangster (7) Kuldeep Sr. 51.5.
1. CAPE MAY, 2. WHISTLEDOWN, 3. SADIYA

4 ARMAGNAC PLATE (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 4.35: 1. Warwick (9) Mohit 60, 2. High Reward (13) Abhay Singh 57, 3. Challenger (10) Md. Ekram 56, 4. Mix The Magic (5) Mukesh K 55.5, 5. Deccan Spirit (4) D.S. Deora 54, 6. Emperor's Charm (8) P. Sai K 54, 7. Sweet Dancer (1) G. Naresh 53.5, 8. Mexican Wave (14) Rafique Sk. 53, 9. Bold Beauty (7) Neeraj 52.5, 10. Her Ladyship (3) Kuldeep Sr. 52.5, 11. Juramento (6) Surya Prakash 52, 12. Tootsie Darling (11) P. Ajeeth K 52, 13. Wind Sprite (2) H.M. Akshay 51.5 and 14. Nyanza (12) Uday Kiran 50.
1. TOOTSIE DARLING, 2. BOLD BEAUTY, 3. JURAMENTO

5 HIMALAYA PLATE (1,400m), (Terms) Maiden, 3-y-o only (Cat. II), 5.05: 1. Garfunkle (1) Trevor 56, 2. Gold Touch (7) Kuldeep Sr. 56, 3. Royal Navy (2) Md. Ekram 56, 4. Twilight King (6) P. Ajeeth K 56, 5. Grit 'N' Grace (3) Mukesh K 54.5, 6. Madante (5) Akshay K 54.5, 7. Northern Sky (4) Antony Raj 54.5, 8. Paththku (9) Neeraj 54.5 and 9. Ruby Tuesday (8) Mohit 54.5.
1. GARFUNKLE, 2. TWILIGHT KING, 3. MADANTE

6 TIME AND PLACE (1,400m) (Terms), 4-y-o and upward (Cat. I), 5.35: 1. Truth (8) I. Chisty 64, 2. Ashoka (4) Akshay K 62, 3. Nonpariel (7) Mukesh K 60, 4. Akido (6) Abhay Singh 56, 5. Espionage (1) Kuldeep Sr. 56, 6. Vivaldo (3) Antony Raj 56, 7. Diablo (9) Ajay K 54, 8. One N Only (11) P. Sai K 54, 9. Uchchaihshravas (2) Md. Ismail 554, 10. Dali's Destiny (10) G. Naresh 52 and 11. Detective (5) Rafique Sk. 52.
1. NONPARIEL, 2. ASHOKA, 3. VIVALDO

7 BLOOMER PLATE (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated upto 25 (Cat. III), 6.05: 1. Amboseli (9) Uday Kiran 60, 2. London Bell (7) Rafique Sk. 60, 3. Star Cruise (6) Kuldeep Sr. 59.5, 4. Always Special (12) P. Ajeeth K 59, 5. Natu Natu (4) Akshay K 58.5, 6. Exponent (3) Abhay Singh 58, 7. Muaser (11) H.M. Akshay 57.5, 8. Deccan Ranger (2) Akshay K 57, 9. Battle On (5) Sonu K 54, 10. Tupac (8) G. Naresh 53, 11. Blue Brigade (1) B. Nikhil 50.5, 12. Grey Sky (10) Md. Ekram 50.5 and 13. Niloufer The Great (13) Afroz K 50.5.
1. DECCAN RANGER, 2. ALWAYS SPECIAL, 3. MUASER
DAY'S BEST: NONPARIEL
Jackpot: 2, 3, 4, 6 & 7.
Mini Jackpot: (i) 1, 2, 3 & 4, (ii) 4, 5, 6 & 7.
Treble: (i) 2, 3 & 4, (ii) 5, 6 & 7.
Tanala: All races.

NEUFC defeats JFC for first victory

ISL

Sports Bureau

Andy Rodriguez scored a brace in the second half as NorthEast United FC defeated Jamshedpur FC 2-1 in an Indian Super League match at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium at Guwahati on Sunday.

With their first win, the Highlanders climbed to seventh in the standings with six points from five matches. Jamshedpur suffered its first defeat of the campaign but stayed in the second spot, having collected 12 points from five outings.

At Kolkata, Mumbai City FC scored a 2-1 victory over Inter Kashi FC.

Mumbai jumped to third place with 11 points from five games while Inter Kashi is eighth (five points from as many games).

The results: At Guwahati: NorthEast United FC 2 (Andy Rodriguez 53, 69) bt Jamshedpur FC 1 (Raphael Messi Bouli 68-pen).

At Kolkata: Inter Kashi FC 1 (Rohit Danu 51) lost to Mumbai City FC 2 (P.N. Noufal 45+6, Lallianzuala Chhangte 52).

THE HINDU GROUP

SPORTSTAR
#ALLINFORSPORTS

INDIA'S CROWN, DEFENDED AT HOME

India stormed to a third T20 World Cup title, defending the crown and winning it at home for the first time. A fearless campaign rewrote the tournament's history.

Also inside: Sanju Samson's Player-of-the-Tournament brilliance that powered India's T20 World Cup triumph, and Jasprit Bumrah's calm mastery that repeatedly turned pressure into control.

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EDUCATIONPLUS

Salil Sahadevan

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Following a footnote

Breakthrough learning often hides in footnotes and margins. How can we train ourselves to value these overlooked learning spaces?

In the mid-19th century, an Austrian monk bred generations of pea plants in his monastery garden with meticulous care. He mapped their traits, recorded the results, and published them in an unknown journal. He went back to his regular teaching, and his work went unnoticed. Decades later, biologists revisited his paper and notes in the margins and found that his experiments revealed the basis of heredity. Once a forgotten footnote, the garden experiment became the seed of modern genetics, and Gregor Mendel its father.

Forgotten

A century later, British chemist Rosalind Franklin captured an X-ray image that revealed the double helix structure of DNA. Known as Photo 51, it was within the footnote of her lab logs and might have remained unseen until Watson and Crick allegedly used it to claim the breakthrough leading to the Nobel Prize, leaving Franklin in the margins for years.

Sometimes, we look too late into the margins of knowledge. In the 14th century, Kerala mathematician Sangamagrama Madhava charted the infinite series for sine, cosine, and approximated pi, long before Newton or Leibniz. His work remained obscure until Charles M. Whish, an East India Company official, highlighted the Kerala School. Later, historian George Gheverghese Joseph furthered this recognition. Recently, Malayalam professor Litty Chacko uncovered unpublished fragments of the works of Madhava after two decades of sifting through thousands of palm-leaf manuscripts. When I asked how, she replied, "From the margins, always from the margins."

The main narratives miss what matters most. The surprise is in the margins and footnotes, where few look. This is more so, as we tend to shrink every communication into shorts, snippets and capsules.

We live in the age of compression bias, where news is reduced to push alerts and books condensed into summaries. See the same logic in our conversations when we say "cut to the chase" or "give me the gist". It is convenient and efficient, but comes at a cost. The margins, where novelty often begins, are erased in summarisation, causing what does not fit to disappear. By ignoring the peripheries, we risk recycling old ideas.

Why do these margins matter? They hold the pieces of knowledge that do not have a home as yet in the mainstream story. They hold contradictions, odd questions, and failed attempts as raw materials for new knowledge, making margins and footnotes intellectual commons free from the pressures of popularity and marketability.

Keeping them alive

So how do we keep the margins alive? Make spaces for incidental learning. You follow one idea and a note at the bottom opens a new door. The thrill of chasing a reference chain teaches a kind of thinking that uses the courage to wander. Serendipity thrives in those knowledge wanderings. If we do not do this, there is a personal loss. Students raised only on summaries and MCQs become efficient consumers but shallow explorers.

In classrooms, it starts with design. Assign work that requires citations. Pick a Wikipedia page on a topic and follow a few linked pages in sequence, noting how each click bends the conversation in unexpected ways, turning a single fact into a series of discoveries. From a passage with rich footnotes, try tracing references back to their source to find surprising insights that did not make it into the main text. Do this with an AI-based citation network, even if that may lead nowhere. Explore connections in ancient texts and palm-leaves using Machine Learning and create spaces for open-ended research where the outcome is unknown.

Note: Exciting rabbit holes often begin at the edges of the page, where the next chapter starts.

Views expressed in this article are personal

The writer is Deputy Secretary with the University Grants Commission and an education design researcher at IIT-Hyderabad.

The Hindu EducationPlus Career Counselling Fair 2026

VIT CHENNAI Presents THE HINDU EDUCATIONPLUS career counselling fair '26 Powered by rit RAJALAKSHMI INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY In Association with Crescent

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The 23rd edition of this event features 40-plus institutions that offer insights into several disciplines, financial institutions to give information on loans, and career guidance sessions with domain experts.

There will be spot admissions and scholarships along with surprise gifts for the first 200 entries on both days.

Date: April 11 and 12 from 10 am to 6 pm

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Prepare honestly

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This column may help

OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

I am preparing for competitive exams, but feel mentally exhausted. I used to be a topper, but I am struggling with consistency and motivation. Why is this happening. Kanagavalli

Dear Kanagavalli,

This could be a mix of performance anxiety, others' expectations of you (living up to being a topper), your own identity crisis, peer pressure and just sheer cognitive burnout. Competitive exams do not guarantee success; they are laborious, uncertain, hard, and long. Is there self-doubt creeping in: what if I fail and don't make it?

Meet a therapist and claim your sense of calm, confidence, and study habits. Only preparation and performance are in your control. Nothing else! Prepare sincerely, honestly, and earnestly. If this exam is not meant to be, work on your Plan B and C.

I graduated from Jammu University (distance education) in 2022 and live in a rural area. I am preparing for the Civil Services exam but feel demotivated because of my educational background and struggle with confidence and communication skills. Sehaj

Dear Sehaj,

What you are feeling has nothing to do with your intelligence or potential.

Civil Services officers are also selected from distance education, state universities, rural and remote regions, and first-generation learners. The exam rewards clarity of thought, consistency, resilience and ability to learn and apply. Your background is a strength because you understand grassroots realities, have probably seen governance gaps firsthand, and know what exclusion feels like.

Do not compare yourself to English-medium toppers, coaching narratives, or social media success stories. Good communication is not a fluent English accent. It is about structured thinking, clarity, simplicity and honesty. Start reading the newspaper out loud. Summarise what you read in your own words, record yourself (audio), and you will hear improvement within a month. Use online discussions and peer groups to get help.

I am a Class 11 Humanities student preparing for CLAT. I have good speaking skills, but I am nervous about public speaking and get easily influenced. I often feel tense about handling college life and dealing with manipulative people. How do I overcome these challenges? Sakshi

Dear Sakshi,

It is normal to feel anxious and tense about college while still in school. You should only care about doing well; do not judge yourself or overthink before anything happens. Identify your core values and use them as your guiding light when you form friendships and other associations. Trust your gut and do not sign up for anything on the spot because of persuasion and pressure.

Work on the pros and cons of every decision and then get back to people and choices. Consciously create distance from people who could be manipulative. Be comfortable in your own skin and work on your self-esteem. Engage in a daily healthy routine that helps you stay grounded and balanced.

My cousin is finishing B.Tech Computer Science from a tier-3 college and is concerned about poor placement prospects. He wants to work in a field that uses Python. How can he get a good job? Poojitha

Dear Poojitha,

A tier-3 college does not block good careers in technology any more. Python-based career options are in demand. He can look at entry roles as a Backend Engineer, Junior Software Developer or be a Data Analyst, Business Analyst, Automation/Python Scripting Engineer, QA Automation Engineer, or DevOps. He must work on building three to four solid GitHub projects. He should actively apply to startups and for contract roles or remote internships.To crack interviews, let him practice Python problems daily and communicate with clarity.

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge

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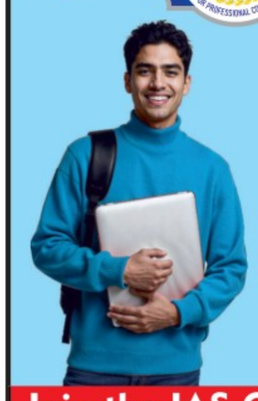

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